AN

ACCOUNT

OF THE

NATURE and EXTENT

OF THE

DIVINE DOMINION & GOODNESSE,

Especially as they refer to the

ORIGENIAN HYPOTHESIS

Concerning the

Preexistence of Souls,

TOGETHER

With a special Account of the vanity and groundlesness of the Hypothesis it self.

Being a second Letter Written to his much Honoured Friend and Kinsman Mr. *Nath. Bisbie*.

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Imprimatur,

ROBERTUS SAY,
VICE-CANCELLARIUS
OXON.

SIR,

I Have now ſatisfied and perhaps ſurpriz'd you too; for I queſtion not but theſe Papers will more prevent then anſwer your expectations: For when you remitted me to my own leaſure to ſatisfie your demands (the true import of a Friends deſires) I am confident you believed I would as well uſe as acknowledge your Favour; and I really thought my next to you ſhould have been a Letter of thanks for your forbearance, and not a final diſcharge of my Obligations. But being ſhortly to bid adieu to my Retirements here, and fearing I ſhall no where elſe enjoy ſo much Privacie and Leaſure; I could not ſatisfie my ſelf till I had gratified your expectations, and put my ſelfe paſt all hazard of diſobeying your Commands. For methinks (Sir) nothing concerns me

so much as those designes that aspire to serve my dearest ---- But my Business is not to complement, and I foresee how exceedingly I shall be straightned in time, and therefore I must without the Ceremony of any farther Preface immediately apply my self to the serious discharge of my Taske, which I shall (following the method your injunctions have prescribed me) perform in three parts (1.) By giving you an account of the true Nature and Extent of Gods Dominion. (2.) By laying down a right Notion of his Goodness. (3.) By proving the Groundlesness and Vanity of the Origenian Hypothesis concerning the Preexistence of Souls. Of each in their order.

OF

OF THE

NATURE and EXTENT OF Gods Dominion.

BY Gods Dominion, I mean that Sovereigne Right and Authority residing in Him in reference to his Creatures, or that Power and Prerogative which he has to dispose of them according to his own good-will and pleasure, and this is indifferently expressed by these three terms of *Jus*, *Potestas*, and *Dominium*: The minute and precise differences whereof seems to lye herein: that *Jus* nakedly signifies a right or freedom to act,

whereas the two latter imply, together with this, a power or ſtrength of acting; And then that Power, which God hath in himſelf antecedently to the Exiſtence of any Created Being, is in rigidneſs and propriety of ſpeech call'd *Poteſtas*; but that which he has and exerciſes ſince the Creation, *Dominium*. But not to inſiſt upon ſuch Niceties, they all promiſcuouſly import Dominion and Sovereignty. Of which many definitions have been attempted, but none of them ſeem to me more accurate and comprehenſive then Mr. *Hobs*'s, when he defines it to be *Libertas propriis facultatibus ſecundum rectam rationem utendi*. Though what Exerciſes of Power are conſiſtent with right Reaſon, and what not, I ſhall diſcourſe anon. But if you fancy ſhort definitions, 'tis the lawful uſe of Power, and ſo implies two things, firſt it ſuppoſes a power or ſtrength to Act, and then it imports the legitimate extent and uſe of it. Now as for the Extent of this Power, 'tis Infinite and Unconfined, as well as all the reſt of the Divine Perfections, and therefore it warrants God to do any thing that will comply with the Reputation of his other Attributes. Whence 'tis that the Beings and Subſiſtencies of all things are entirely at his diſpoſal: It was at his choice, whether he would ever or never create any thing; and it is ſtill in his Power either to continue the frame of

De Cive. l. 1. c. 1.

things in the same state they are in, or to erect a new one, and that better or worse then the present, and any thing else, that is not inconsistent with the perfection of his Nature and Attributes. But for a fuller Evidence hereof, it is necessary to observe that there is a twofold acceptation of Right, either more loose, when it signifies a License & Freedom to do any thing; or more restrained, when it signifies an Obligation to do any thing: The difference between them is this, that the former signifies Liberty, and the latter Duty; that is extended to any thing that is not unlawful, this only extends to things due, and requir'd by Justice and Equity: For instance, there is a Right to demand Debts, and a Right to pay them; the former may be done, because no equity forbids it, but the latter must be done because Justice requires it. Upon this account (to give you this Notion by the way) every man is bound to make good his Promises, though not his Threatnings and Punishments, because promises make us Debtors, but in reference to threatned Penalties we are Creditors, for the Offendor owes the punishment to the person Offended: But though every man be bound to pay his Debts, yet he is not bound to demand them, for he has a Right to Relax as well as Challenge his due: The Rewards therefore consequent upon promises, being Debts due from me, I am bound by the first sort

of Right to pay them, but the Penalties consequent upon Threatnings, being Debts owing to me, I am permitted by the second sort of Right, either to demand or remit them.

And thus there is a twofold Right in God, the one whereof referres to his Sovereignty, which is nothing but an absolute Liberty to act or not to act, as Himself shall see cause; the other to his Justice and Holiness, whereby God is obliged to act suitably to the Essential Rules of Justice and Equity. For the Divine Justice is exercised only about things Good and Just, but his Dominion about all things that are not Evil or Unjust; things therefore being the Objects of Gods Dominion, not because they are Just, but because they are not Unjust, it is extended to every thing that is not contrary to Justice, *i. e.* to every thing that is not Evil. But I shall wave all general considerations, and onely consider the Extent of the Divine Prerogative in reference to Mankind, not onely because 'tis most pertinent to our present designe, but also because what I shall discourse concerning the Extent and Latitude of Gods Power over Men, may by Analogy of Reason, be applied to all other Creatures endued with Sense and Perception: Now, in Treating of this matter proposed, I shall onely consider,

1. What

1. *What God can do.*
2. *What he can not do.*

1. First, Then God has Power to take back from us all or part of what he has given us, *i. e.* He can either utterly destroy our Beings, or take from us so many Comforts of life, and inflict upon us so many Calamities, as shall leave us in a condition only preferable to that of Non-Existence; for all that we have to render our conditions more valuable then *not Being*, is the free Product of the Divine Power; But 'tis a certain and undoubted truth that every Superiour Authority has Power to Revoke all the free Issues of its own Power, unless it have abridg'd it selfe from the Exercise thereof by some special compact or promise: For compact and promise lay an obligation upon him that makes it, and vests a Right in the Person to whom 'tis made; and therefore where Benefits are bestowed without these Instruments of conveighing Right, there the Donor has the same Right to withdraw, as he had to give them; and therefore that God, who has given us our Beings, has full Power arbitrariously to destroy them.

But here it will be Objected, that destroying the life of a guiltless person, is justly accounted the most salvage and unmerciful piece of Injustice in the World; that 'tis almost the only Instance,

which

which carries in it an undeniable Iniquity antecedent to all Humane Lawes and Sanctions. So that when Mr. *Hobs* asserts that in the State of Nature, there could be no Injuries and Violences Acted amongst Men, because they could not have a Right of Propriety in any thing, before they had by mutual Compacts apportion'd each mans share, if he had limited his assertion to possessions of Lands, and all other Proprieties Forreigne to a mans own person, it had been equally true and blamelesse; for Nature doth not assign this Moiety to *Titius*, and that to *Caius*, but leaves us to share the Earth among our selves, and to Enclose what she had left in Common, into particular proprieties, as we shall agree among our selves. But when he extends the forementioned assertion to the persons of Men, his Errour is as palpable as 'tis mischievous, because every man has a right and propriety in himselfe Antecedently to all Law and Compact. There needs no Covenant to appoint that I shall have a propriety in my own person; nay, 'tis as impossible it should be otherwise, as that I should alienate my self from my selfe; and all the grants of all the men in the world cannot Vest me in a greater propriety to my selfe then Nature has, because they cannot make me to be more my selfe then I already am;

am; so that though I were in Mr. Hobs's Natural State of Warre, if he, or any other man should take away my life, without just cause, he would do me at least as evident an Injury, as if he should now, either by Fraud or Violence, thrust me from mine Inheritance, to which I have an unquestionable Right, both by his own consent, and the Laws of that Civil Society, of which we are Members, because he will Rob me of that, in which I have as clear a Right and Propriety, as 'tis possible for me to have in any thing that depends upon Pact or Covenant. Well then, it being thus Evident that to take away the Life of an Innocent person, is among men a most Enormous and Inhumane piece of Injustice, and that antecedently to all positive Sanctions and Contracts; why should it not be so in reference to God, the Rules of Equity being the same to all, Eternal, Unalterable, and abstract from all Persons, States and Relations?

To which I answer, that notwithstanding there are the same general Rules and Principles of Justice in reference to God, as to Men, that yet the particular Instances are not the same; because Gods Relation to the Creatures being infinitely different from that, which they bear to each other, the particular Actions and Displays of his Justice, though

though measured by the same Rule, must needs be of a widely different Nature, not because the Measure is changeable, but because the relation of the Persons suffers variety and alteration: For God being the Supream Sovereign and Cause of all, has upon that Account power to deprive any, or all of his Creatures of what Perfections and Endowments he pleases, whereas the Creatures not having any natural Dominion over one another, they cannot take away from their fellow creatures any thing which God has given them, without manifest Robbery, unless in such cases where the Supream Lord has been pleased to communicate any part of his Power and Dominion. And so in humane Societies, though there are the same Lawes of Justice in reference to all men, yet there are not alwayes the same Instances; for though it be granted that every man has by right of Nature a power of punishing any one that injures him, yet having entered into Societies, either by Gods Institution, or their own consent, or both, the exercise of this power is devolved upon some peculiar persons whom we call Magistrates, in whose hands every man has for the common good, deposited his Authoritative Rights; its upon that account just and lawful for the Magistrate to punish and take away Delinquents, but unjust for the private person to do the same, for that were to Usurp that

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Authority, which I have granted away to them (unleſs in caſes of neceſſity, as when I am aſſaulted by another, and have no other way to preſerve my own Life, then by deſtroying my Aſſailants, there the Common-wealth is preſumed to allow me to exerciſe my natural right my ſelf) but where no ſuch neceſſity urges, there the Governours of the Society, in which I am, and to whom I have paſſed away the Exerciſes of my Original Right, are to Execute Juſtice for me: ſo that private perſons, not having power to puniſh Criminals, as Magiſtrates have, that action would be judged Murder in thoſe, which is accounted Juſtice in theſe, notwithſtanding that they are both ſubject to the ſame common Rules and Maximes of Equity.

Duo cum idem faciunt ſæpe, ut poſſis dicere
Hoc licet impune facere huic, illi non licet;
Non quod diſſimilis res eſt, ſed is qui facit.

And thus there being ſo manifeſt a diſproportion between God and Men, in reference to their propriety in, and dominion over the life of man; God may have a right to act that, which no Creature can do without the groſſeſt and moſt exorbitant Injuſtice: for ſeeing that propriety, which every Man has in himſelf, is held from the free gift of our Supream Lord, and that not confined by any Promiſe or Covenant, he may cancel and reverſe it

when he pleaſes, only by taking back what he has given. And if we could ſtand in the ſame relation to, or dependance on any creature, as we do to Him, that creature would have as great a right to deveſt us of the propriety we have in our own Eſſences, as God himſelf has; but becauſe the former can never be ſuppoſed, that's the reaſon the latter can never happen.

2. This Power and Dominion, which God has over an Innocent perſons life, and all its appendant priviledges, may be exerciſed by occaſion of another mans ſin, for what God has a power to do abſolutely, he may certainly do upon any occaſion, for this is only to make uſe of the Inſtances of his Dominion, to ſerve other deſigns of his Providence. Thus God threatens to *Viſit the Iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children, unto the third and fourth Generation*; *i. e.* to puniſh the Impieties of wicked Parents, by bringing their Poſterity into thoſe evil Circumſtances, into which he might have brought them by vertue of his Supream Dominion, though not onely themſelves, but their Progenitors had been faultleſs. The Poſterity of *Cham* was conſign'd to ſlavery for their Fathers Impiety. Seventy thouſand men expiated *Davids* folly; and *Sauls* ſons were hanged for their Fathers perfidiouſneſs; and the ſinne of *Ahab* was viſited upon his Children. Scripture ſupplies

Exod. 20. ver. 5.

us with infinite more instances, where God makes use of the Sons infelicity to punish the Fathers sin, in which cases God onely makes his Sovereignty minister to the designs of Justice, and if it be lawful, as I have proved it is, for God to exercise his Supream Dominion *absolutely*, surely it cannot be unlawful to do it with *respect* to other ends of Providence. And such was the Origine of all the common miseries of mankind: God created man at first in a more perfect and happy state, but upon occasion of *Adams* prevarication, he devested all mankind of a great part of those priviledges and perfections, with which he had endued humane nature; And all this God might have done, though *Adam* had never sinned, and therefore 'tis no Injustice that God has made his Posterity the Heirs of his misfortunes. The constitution of *Adams* body was probably so regular and harmonious, that it had no natural propensions contrary to those of his mind, but was entirely subject to all the Dictates of his understanding, his Organs clear and well-disposed, his Spirits brisk and active, his Humours spirituous and oylie; the ferments of his body regular and steady in their motions, and not infected with those malignant tinctures, that hurry us into all manner of exorbitant passions and appetites. The Earth was fruitful, and of its own accord, brought forth all sorts of wholesome and

pleaſant Fruits: Man was ſurrounded with pleaſures and delights, and had nothing elſe to do but to take his eaſe and enjoy them. But when *Adam* fell, God disrob'd him of moſt of thoſe great and happy Priviledges, and caſt him into a condition of life uneaſie and troubleſome. Now our bodies are unactive, ſickly, and indiſpoſed, and inſtead of being Inſtruments to the actings of the mind, are the greateſt lets and hindrances; Paradice is turned into a Wilderneſs, the Earth is barren and accurſed, and man muſt earn his bread by the ſweat of his brows, and this has ever ſince been the condition of Mankind: And though this be a ſad ſtory, yet after all theſe loſſes, our condition is ſtill competently, or rather extreamly happy, for beſides that, if we will but be conſiderate, and live by the uſe of our rational faculties, we may enjoy contentment enough in this world, to render our lives pleaſant and comfortable; God has prepared for us moſt exquiſite and raviſhing delights in the next, only if we will forbear to perſue our Buitiſh Appetites, from which he hath affrighted us by the fearfuleſt threatnings, and reſolve to follow the dictates of Reaſon and Sobriety, to which we are encouraged by the biggeſt Rewards and Promiſes; ſo that notwithſtanding all the preſent weakneſſes and imperfections of our natures, a man muſt be prodigiouſly abſurd and ſottiſh to make him-

himself miserable. And if men will choose to be wicked and miserable, against all the Principles of Reason and Interest, they have no Reason to blame the Condition of their Natures for that, which proceeds purely from the choice of their Wills. So that though God has punished the Prevarication of *Adam*, by the evil Condition of all his posterity, yet he has done nothing unjust, because he might have placed us all in the same Condition, though neither *Adam* nor our selves had prevaricated his Sanctions.

And this is no more then what is in some instance or other practised in all Common-wealths. As in *England* every man holding his Estate of the King, and the right of all Tenures being derived from his Grant with certain Conditions, if any of the Grants fail in the performance of the Conditions on their part, the Grantor may justly disseize both them and their Heirs of their Estates. Thus if any Person be convicted of Treason against the Crown, he is thereupon attainted, and not only his Estate escheats to the King as supream Lord, but his Blood too is corrupted, so that his Posterity are not capable of Inheritance, as deriving no inheritable blood, and consequently no Right from him. In which case he that should have been next Heir cannot justly think himself injured by being deprived of his Inheritance, although himself had

not

not by any misdemeanor forfeited it, yet he having no right to it, but what was derived from his Ancestors, and that being rescinded by breach of those Conditions, upon which it was suspended, he can with no more equity claim a right in the Fee, then he could though his Ancestors had never been vested in it. And thus that Entail of Priviledges, which God, of his free goodness, had settled upon *Adam* and his Heirs for ever, upon Condition of their Obedience to his Laws, was by the disobedience of *Adam* cut off from himself and all his Posterity.

3. The Rights of Gods Dominion over sinless Creatures, do not extend so far as to warrant his dooming them to a condition more wretched and forlorn then *Non-existence*. That he has power to reduce them into a state not worse then Not-being is already proved, but farther he cannot go without transgressing all the lines of Goodness and Equity, because if he should, he would rob his Creatures of more then he had ever given them; And if this would not be an injurious Cruelty, I must challenge all the world to tell me what would. This Assertion is level'd against those men, who are so hardy as to say that God might, to shew the uncontrolableness of his Sovereignty, have decreed infinite myriads of faultless Creatures to endless and insupportable Torments.

That

That ever such Thoughts could enter into the minds of men! For what can we imagine more repugnant to all the notions of goodness and equity then to be the deliberate and sole Author of the biggest misery to an innocent and harmless Person? What more Heavenly wide from the nature of true goodness? 'Tis a malice so near and abstracted, that it can reside no where but in the Breasts of Fiends and Devils; nay 'tis the blackest Part of their natures, and that very ingredient which makes them what they are. Besides, how can God be glorified in the eternal miseries of guiltless Creatures? How can their deserved damnation be conducive to his Interests? How can their unmerited torments gratifie infinite goodness, or add to infinite happiness? Could he promote his own Real Felicity by the Infelicities of an innocent Creature, yet we cannot imagine him so selfish spirited as to effect it, much less for the meer ostentation of his greatness. If God can damn his Creatures to magnifie the absoluteness of his Dominion, why do we raile at Tyrants and Devils, when they upon the same account take pleasures in the miseries of others? God is supposed to delight in the advancement of his own glory, but can we suppose him to delight in the eternal miseries of Innocents? Was there ever any Tyrant so salvage, as to please himself in the endless and most exquisite Tortures

of

of an harmless Infant? 'Tis the propertie of Devils, (whose malice is boiled up to an infinite rancour and crueltie) to make anothers torment their pleasure, and do mischeif for mischeifs sake; And shall we fasten that upon God, which is the Devils Reproach? Shall he contrive Mischeif, feed and recreate upon Misery, and glut his Vengeance with Innocent blood? Shall he that delights not in the Death of Sinners, seek Pleasure and Glory in the Eternal Miseries of Innocents? This is the very top and extremity of Cruelty; so that were it thus, we must add Cruelty to the Divine Attributes, and believe him as Infinite in that, as in any other.

Besides all this, meer Existence without Perception carries in it no more Goodness or Happiness then Non-existence, and is only desireable before it in reference to those Perceptive Capacities, which are founded in it: 'Tis all one not to be, and to be in a state of senseless inactivity; take away Perception, and 'tis indifferent whether the substance remain or utterly perish; as suppose the Poets Metamorphosis had been as great Realities as they were Fictions, it had been indifferent to the Persons that suffered them, whether they were chang'd into Trees, Stones and Flowers, or into nothing, and it would have been the same thing to *Niobe* whether she were petrified or annihilated.

Upon

Upon this account arose that ancient Dispute, *Whether never to have been born had not been better then to be?* For they considering only the present Stage of affairs, where these measures of good and evil seem to be dispensed in equal proportions, were doubtful which way to determine; but those of them who thought the world to be more replenish'd with ungrateful and displeasing objects then the contrary, preferred Non-existence; the chief assertors whereof were some of the melancholy Philosophers, such as *Heraclitus* and *Empedocles*, together with the *Tragedians*, who in the Persons of forlorn and miserable men are full of little sentences and discourses to this purpose, and this opinion was so ancient, *ut Author & Initium illius prorsus ignoretur*, as *Gassendus* asserts. Ethic. l. 1. c. 1.

But they, who with more truth, counted the world was fuller of pleasures then miseries, did with more satisfaction esteem their existence a privilledge, so that they preferred not, *existence* before *non-existence* upon its own score, but upon the account of those pleasant perceptions which were founded in it. Well then, it being evident that existence is good or evil in order to the perceptions that are founded in it, where 'tis the basis of nothing but tormenting Perception, and where the continuance of life is nothing else but the continuance of misery, there 'tis the greatest, because 'tis the

fountain, of all miſeries. So that if God can create a Being only to make it miſerable, and condemn it to the Regions of ſadneſs and eternal darkneſs, his creation would be ſo far from being any kind of benefit, that it would be the greateſt ill-turn or injury he could poſſibly act. Nay, this ſtill raiſes the Crueltie, in that rather then want an object for it, he would make one, and ſet infinite power on work only to exerciſe an infinite crueltie, and manifeſt himſelf as abſolute in Tyranny, as he is almighty in Power. From all this I ſuppoſe 'tis unqueſtionably evident, that for God to Create an innocent Creature to make it everlaſtingly miſerable would be the higheſt act of crueltie imaginable.

It was long ſince obſerved, that there was never any opinion ſo abſur'd, which was not maintain'd by ſome of the ancient Philoſophers, but yet there are not to be found among them any ſuch hateful ſentiments concerning Gods tranſactions with his Creatures, as this I am diſcourſing againſt, which carries in it ſuch apparent contradictions to the Divine Attributes, that it could never have found entrance into the minds of men, had they not thought it was ſuggeſted to them by Revelation: for the only thing that is pleaded on its behalf is the groſsly miſtaken ninth Chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*, which they apply to Gods

eternal

eternal Decrees, although nothing can be more apparent then that it treats of a quite different matter; For Saint *Paul* having discoursed of the universal Apostacy, of both Jews and Gentiles, from the practise of true goodness; and of Gods merciful designments to pardon and receive them all into favour, so they would be content to obtain it that way, which he had made known to the world by Jesus Christ, and not by the works of the *Mosaick Law*; and also that many of the Gentiles had accepted of the conditions *proposed* to them in the *Gospel*, and therefore that if the Jews should persevere in their obstinate adherence to the Mosaick dispensation, God would cast them off, and take in the Gentiles for his favourites: Saint *Paul* having, I say, discoursed of these things in the fore-going Chapters, he here supposes this would seem very strange and absurd to his Country-men that God should cashcire his peculiar darling Nation, upon whom he had bestowed so many signal priviledges; *To whom pertaineth the Adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenants, &c.* To which he answers that the supream Sovereign was not tyed to any peculiar Nation, but that he could adopt whom he pleased to be his favourites, and that though the Jews had been blest with greater advantages then the Gentiles, yet notwithstanding God might discard them, and take in these; as he had made the Israelites his

peculiar People rather then the Edomites, notwithstanding they were of the younger Family, &c. And that this is the genuine scope of Saint *Pauls* discourse is unexceptionably evident from its conclusion, *verse* 30, 31, 32. *What shall we say then? that the Gentiles which followed not after Righteousness, have attained to the Righteousness which is of faith: But Israel, which followed after the Law of Righteousness, hath not attained to the Law of Righteousness. Wherefore? because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the Law.* Now what can be more clear, then that he speaks of the rejecting of the Jews, because of their obstinate adherence to the Mosaick Law, and of the calling of the Gentiles because of their Faith and closing with the Gospel. But if you would see this improved to the strength and evidence of a Demonstration, you need only be at the pains to read over *Episcopius* his Paraphrase upon the Chapter.

Before I conclude, I will endeavour a little more fully to illustrate and confirm my fore-going Propositions by a brief Arbitration of a late fiercely argued dispute, *viz.* What is the True Ground of Gods Sovereignty over man. For some assert that it Bottoms upon the Benefit of Creation; thereby the better to Controule that horrid Opinion, that asserts, God might have made a Crea-

Episcopius, Curcellæus, &c.

true

ture to no other purpose, than to make it Eternally miserable, only to shew the Almightiness of his Sovereignty; for (say they) God cannot exercise more Sovereignty over his Creatures, then he has, but he cannot have Right to more then he has given, and therefore the utmost of his Right is to destroy what he has made; but if he should afflict an Innocent creature with Eternal punishments, he would go beyond the Right he has acquired by its Creation; because he would thereby take away more then he has given, and place his Creature in a worse Condition then that of Non-Existence, in which he found it. Now because the benefits bestowed by God upon his Creatures are finite, they infer that his Sovereignty resulting from them must be finite and limited, and therefore that they have a Right, of which God cannot Rob them without Violence and Injury. But others ground the Divine Dominion upon the irresistibleness of his Power, thereby to justifie that Right (or Tyranny) they have fastned upon Him, arbitrariously to Reprobate and Damne his Innocent Creatures. For, say they, Power Irresistible justifies all actions really and properly, in whomsoever it be found, and therefore such Power being in God only, it without other helps, is sufficient Justification of any action He doth; so that if He

Cavin. and Mr. Hobs.

had

had from all Eternity consign'd infinite Myriads of innocent Creatures to Eternal flames, the uncontrouleableness of His Omnipotence would have made good the Equity of such a mercileſs Decree. And therefore they reſolve the Maxime, that God cannot Sin, not into his Holineſs, but Power; His very doing a thing never ſo Injurious and Irregular, and that antecedently to all Law, making it juſt, and conſequently no ſin.

But for my part, I think both of them are evidently miſtaken, the former in their Principles, and the latter in their Concluſions. To the firſt therefore I reply, that it is apparent that the Divine Right and Dominion over the Creatures, could not be founded upon the Benefits of Creation, but upon the abſolute unlimitedneſs of his Power, becauſe God was from all Eternity inveſted with a Power of doing any thing that was not misbecoming his Divine Perfections, and therefore He acquired not any new Right from his Creation, but only made Objects to exerciſe his Eternal right upon; I confeſs there is a Power acquired by benefits, where there is none antecedently, becauſe they beſtow an [illegible] or Preheminence upon him that gives above him that receives them; but God being alwayes infinitely Perfect, could not acquire any new Excellence from the Worlds Creation, and therefore the collation of Benefits cannot beget any new Power,

Power in Him; because the Power which He had antecedently to all his Benefits, was not capable of being made greater; for He always had a Power to Act any thing that lay within the bounds of just and lawful; but his Power since the Creation is not more then so, and therefore he acquired no new Prerogative by it. And then, if the Creatures should have a right to any thing, of which God cannot deprive them, they would have something of their own, to which God has no Right: But seeing every Creature is entirely Gods, & can have nothing which is not His gift, and can do nothing which is not His debt; it cannot have a Right where God has none, because He cannot but have an entire Right in his own Works. And therefore if in any thing Gods Supream Sovereignty seems confined, 'tis not bounded by any Rights or Privileges in the Creature, but only regulated by His own Perfections.

And this brings me to the latter sort, who ground Gods Dominion in the Almightiness of his Power, and infer thence, that He may do any thing though never so Injurious and Irregular. I allow their Principle, but deny their Inference, because God is essentially Good and Just as well as Powerful; take away his Justice and his Goodness, and you take away his Divinity, without them he would be but an Almighty Devil. And therefore, though the

the Rights of Gods Power be not streightned by any External obligation, because that is tied on by a Superiour Authority, and so cannot agree to him whose Prerogative is Supream; yet they are bounded by an Internal Principle, for Gods goodness may be said to tye and restrain him not to do any thing repugnant to it self. Now this is not properly a Restraint or Confinement superinduced upon his Natural right, but is rather a circumscription set and chose by himself, which he cannot Transgress because he will not. Neither does it limit the Divine Prerogative any more then his Omnipotence is limited, because he cannot do any thing that is absurd, & unworthy the Wisdom of his Understanding, or sinful & repugnant to the Purity of his Will: For as he can not do such things, not because his Power is not Infinite, but because his Wisdom and Holiness are so; (for its not from defect of Power, but from the Infiniteness of his other Perfections, that He cannot act any thing that's either Sinful or Foolish;) so neither is it for want of Sovereignty, that he cannot do any thing Indecent or Tyranical, but because he is infinitely Holy as well as Powerful, he is thereby obliged to do nothing unbeseeming his Holiness. And therefore that God cannot Tyranize, 'tis not because his Power has limits, but because his Goodnesse has none. And so the Divine Will is the Measure

of

of Justice, not because its absolutely Sovereigne, but because its infinitely good, and that whatsoever God wills or does, is therefore just, because He wills it; derives not from the Sovereignty, but from the goodness of his will. For if this be taken away, 'tis all one whether you call him God or Devil; he may lye, and forswear, and act all the Villanies in the world, and then what a brave condition is mankind in, so repugnant to all the principles of piety, honesty, and policy, is that opinion, that allows no essential Justice and Injustice, but derives all goodness from arbitrary Power.

Of the Nature of the Divine Goodness.

HAving briefly explain'd the Nature and full Extent of Gods Sovereigne Prerogative, we come in the next place to give an account of his Goodness and Benignity; of which Attribute we must be careful to assign such a notion as is not inconsistent with the former: Chiefly because the Idea of God consists mainly in Dominion and Sovereignty; The notion of him in Scripture never refers to his Essence, but always to his Power and Empire; and the names by which he is there expressed do not so much denote his Nature, as his Supream and Almighty Prerogative; for all his Appellatives (except *Jah* and *Jehovah*, which expres his constancy and veracity)

import only a Supream and Almighty Sovereign; so that the Scripture represents God under no other notion, then as the Supream Lord and Sovereign of the Universe; and therefore we must be wary of attributing any thing to him, that either lessens or quite destroys the freedom and uncontroulableness of his Dominion; and may withal conclude, that no property which complies not with it, can be attributed to him, and consequently that that's a false notion of his goodness, that interferes with his Dominion. And therefore they that assert Gods goodness to be a necessary Agent, that cannot but do that which is best, and so make all the Divine actions the necessary results of his goodness, directly supplant, and destroy all the rights of his Power and Dominion: For if all the effects of Gods power be the natural Emanations of his goodness, and depend not upon the free determinations of his will, it will follow that God can have no liberty or dominion in relation to them, because necessity is altogether inconsistent with the liberty or freedom of Sovereign power; Sovereignty bottoming upon a liberty and freedom of acting; For how can he that has no Power and Dominion over his own Actions, have power over any one else, for in that there can be no power without a liberty to use and exercise it, nor any exercise of power but by acting, it necessarily follows that

that Agent that has no liberty or freedom of acting, is utterly uncapable of any Power or Dominion. And therefore if all Gods actions were the necessary Emanations of his goodness, it must necessarily destroy all the rights and liberties of his Sovereignty and Dominion.

The *Platonists* assert, that Gods infinite goodness necessitates him to do always that wch is best, Θεῖος δὲ οὔτ' ἦν οὔτ' ἔστι τῷ ἀείστῳ δρᾷν ἄλλο πλὴν τὸ κάλλιστον. Ἐν Τίμαιο. (sayes *Plato*) and therefore that all the Divine works were produced by an irresistible necessity, and that he had no more power not to do what he has done, then the Sun has to withhold his influences, or an overflowing fountain to keep back its streams. And upon this foundation they erect any Hypotheses that sute with their own fancies, but cheifly that of the Pre-existence of Souls: Because (say they) 'tis better they should Pre-exist, and therefore Divine goodness, which does always that which is best, must of necessity have given them a better and happier state of life and self-enjoyment, before they descended into these bodies. But these mens minds are so excessively possessed with thoughts of Gods goodness, as to neglect all his other Attributes, advancing it to such an exorbitant Preheminence, as to make it not onely Usurp upon, and invade the Rights and Priviledges of other Attributes, but also to banish all other Per-

fections from the Divine nature, and engroſs the Deity wholly to it ſelf. For this notion of Gods goodneſs is moſt apparently inconſiſtent, not only with his Power and Dominion, but with all his other moral Perfections. But in order to a further ſatisfaction herein, I ſhall give you a breif account of the Divine goodneſs, and ſhew it to be not a neceſſary, but a free and ſelf-moving Agent.

The Divine goodneſs then is of three ſorts; either as 'tis taken for the perfection of his nature, or for the ſanctity and holineſs of his mind, or for the free bounty and beneficence of his will; Though the two latter are properly but branches of the former; Juſtice and Beneficence being abſolutely neceſſary to the Infinite perfection of the Divine nature. The firſt ſort I ſhall omit to diſcourſe of, as being impertinent to our preſent purpoſe, and onely account for the two laſt, and firſt of the former.

Gods Sanctity or Holineſs, is that natural or eſſential Goodneſs, whereby he cannot but act ſuitably to the excellence and dignity of his Rational nature: For the dignity of the Divine nature, conſiſting in Reaſon and Wiſdom, this is prefered the meaſure and rule of his Actions; and therefore 'tis nothing elſe but that natural Juſtice, Equity and Rectitude, which is the meaſure of all Gods tranſactions with his Creatures, and conſiſts

ſiſts in doing every thing that right Reaſon requires, and not doing any thing, that it forbids. Now the Relation this Goodneſs has to the Divine Dominion, is to bound and regulate it in the exerciſe of its Rights and Liberties; becauſe God has power to do any thing not inconſiſtent with it; ſo that the true way to find out how far the Divine Prerogative extends, is to diſcover what is repugnant to the Nature of goodneſs and equity; for every thing beſide is ſubject to the free diſpoſal of the Divine Will. Thus God cannot delight in the eternal miſeries and calamities of Innocent Creatures, he cannot ſecretly reſolve and take care that his creatures ſhall act thoſe Impieties, which himſelf openly hates, forbids and threatens: he cannot lay upon us Impoſſible Commandements: he cannot violate his Faith, and not perform his Promiſes, Oaths, and Covenants, becauſe they are all of them eſſentially evil, and contrary to the Natural and Eternal Laws of Equity and Right Reaſon.

But *Goodneſs*, as its Equivalent with Benignity, Bounty, or Benificence, is a free, conſtant and habitual propenſion of will to do *Good*. And being ſeated in the Divine Will as one of its main Properties, it muſt not be ſuppoſed to deſtroy the freedome of its Nature, but rather to participate of it. For the Divine will is endued with the higheſt

kind

kind of Libertie, as it imports a freedome not only from Forreign Violence, but also from inward neceſsity; For ſpontaneity or immunity from coaction without indifferency carrys in it as great neceſsity as thoſe motions, that' proceed from violence or mechaniſm: and a Beaſt, that of its own accord goes to Paſture, would have as much Freedom as *God* has, if his actions were only ſpontaneous, and proceeded not from a chooſing and ſelf-determining Principle. And therefore when I aſſert the Divine will to be Free, I mean that it is a Rational and Active Facultie, that has Power and Dominion over its own actions, and that can be determined only by its own intrinſick energie, in ſo much that all the external incentives requiſite to its acting being ſuppoſed, it yet remains ſo indifferent and undetermined in it ſelf, as that it is able either to exert or ſuſpend its action. For unleſs the divine will enjoy this kind of freedom, it had as good have none at all, all other ſorts of Libertie being fettered and determined by fatal Neceſſities. And the Fataliſt do but looſe their Labour, when they endeavour to invent ways of reconciling Liberty with Neceſſity, unleſs they can alſo make Indifferency conſiſtent with it; becauſe all neceſſity of what nature ſoever implies a determin'd and unavoidable Fatalitie, which apparently deſtroys all the foundations of Religion and Moralitie; For ne-

necessity is not inconsistent with moral Goodness, because 'tis of this or that sort, but simply because 'tis necessity: for the only cause why a necessary Agent is not capable of Moralitie, is because 'tis not able to determine it self to Good or Evil, and consequently not capable of being directed and governed by Laws, Rewards and Punishments. For what other reason can there be imagined, why any Agent is incapable of being thus governed, then that it has no power and command over its own Actions, the Office of Laws being to enjoyn them, to whom they are prescribed, that they determine themselves to act according to their Prescriptions? But to require this of a principle void of any such power of self-determination, is as absurd as to require it of Stones & Trees, because the absurdity of both consists in requiring obedience, where there is no principle or capacity able to render it. And therefore unless they can reconcile necessity & indifferency so, as that the same Principle shall be necessarily determin'd to one extream, and yet remain so indifferent, as to be able, if it please to determine it self to the other, it will be altogether fruitless to make other sorts of liberty not inconsistent with necessity. But this they can never do, unless they can bring the extreams of a contradiction together, and make it all one to be determined and undetermined in reference to the same

Action.

Action. Thus (for Inſtance) that Principle that is endued with no other Liberty, then what conſiſts in meer ſpontaneity and immunity from violence is, without indifferency and a power of ſelf-determination, at as great a diſtance from moral Good or Evill, as it would be, if it were acted meerly by external force and violence, becauſe the reaſon why that which is moved only by force, is not a principle capable of morality, is becauſe it has no power at all over its own motion, and ſo is moved with a fatal and unalterable neceſſity, but a ſpontaneus or unforced Action, if it proceed not from an indifferent but neceſſary Agent, is as fatal, and as neceſſary, as if it were forced, and as little ſubject to the determination of the Principle, from whence it flows, as it would though it proceeded from a forreigne and violent one, and by conſequence is equally incapable of morality. And ſo that principle, which is not only at liberty from Co-action, but is alſo endued with Reaſon and Underſtanding is, without indifferency and a power of ſelf-determination, not leſs uncapable of moral Good and Evil, then that which is quite devoid of Rational faculties; becauſe 'tis acted by an equal neceſſity. For if the Judgement and definitive ſentence of the underſtanding be natural and neceſſary (as it not only is, but is alſo unanimouſly acknowledged to be) and if the wills

follow-

following this Judgement be as natural and as neceſſary as its ſelf; then 'tis as extravagant to command the will not to imbrace the object commended to it by the underſtanding, as 'tis to command the underſtanding to judge otherwiſe of it then it does, which is the ſame abſurdity as to command the eye to ſee an object, after another manner then its repreſented to it, becauſe they are both determined by an equal neceſſity. From all which it follows by all the Laws of Inference, that if Gods goodneſs ſhould take away the Indifferency of his will, it would certainly deſtroy not only his Freedome, but all his moral Perfections and Accompliſhments: which is my firſt Argument.

2. If the Divine goodneſs or Benificence were a neceſſary Agent, it would not only deſtroy the nature of the ſubject, in which it reſides, but alſo, what is more abſurd, its own: for 'tis abſolutely neceſſary to the nature of Beneficence and Goodneſs, that it proceed from a free and elective principle. No courteſie can oblige, but what is free and choſen, and the obligation of benefits is only then acknowledg'd, when they are received from one, that had a power not to beſtow them, for otherwiſe they are owing not to his favour and good-will, but to chance or neceſſity. We make no returns of gratitude to the Sun for his kind viſits, and benigne Influences, becauſe his emanations

flow from a bare necessity of Nature: And *Joshuah* thank'd him not for standing still at his request and interest: I should think it a strange Solecisme in Courtship, if any one should make me retributions for a favour, that proceeded only from some necessity of nature & not from choise of will. Because the reason of the obligingness of benefits is, that they argue Benevolence and good Intentions in the donor towards the person, on whom he bestows them, but when they are the Issues of a necessary and unelective cause, they flow not from Goodwill, and argue no benevolence in their Principle, but are the pure Results of Nature. And therefore if all the Communications of Gods goodness be necessary, they may argue the fulness of his nature, but cannot the goodness of his will, because that is founded upon choice and freedome. I have in my former reason endeavoured to evince that a necessity of acting, of what sort soever, is not capable of moral Good or Evil, because 'tis inconsistent with a Dominion over ones own actions, in which all morality is founded, for an Agent that has no power and command over its own Actions, and that acts because it must, whatsoever excellent and commendable effects it may produce, is as uncapable of morality as those senseless Machins, that move by the Laws of matter and motion, because it produces its effects after the same manner as

mechanical causes do, namely, by a necessity of nature. And if any artificial *Automata* were endued with deliberative, elective and self-moving Principles, so as to have power over their own motions, they would in degrees of proportion be capable of doing well or ill, but because they have no elective and self-moving power, that's the Reason why their motions are uncapable of being good or evil; and consequently all causes, whose effects result from the same necessity of Nature, and that have no power, to restrain their emanations, are as uncapable of morality as these liveless Engines, because they lye under the same incapacity. Now then Beneficence being a moral Excellency, it must loose its morality, and consequently its nature, when 'tis natural and necessary, and therefore if all the emanations of the Divine Bounty be such, it will unavoidably follow, that there is no such vertue or Beneficence and Goodness in God, so that we may safely conclude that though the Communications of Gods Goodness to his Creatures be exceedingly agreeable to his Nature, yet to make them necessary and natural Results, is by denying their being free, to deny their being Good.

3. God can never act contrary to his necessary and essential properties, as because he is essentially *wise, just & holy*, he can do nothing that is foolish, unjust and wicked. And therefore if Gods Beneficence

and Bounty were so natural, as that all its exertions were necessary, he could never act otherwise; but that he frequently does, as is evident in all the Instances of his Anger and Severity, which not only Reason but Scripture opposes to Benignity, *Rom.* 11. 22. *Behold therefore the Goodness and Severity of God; on them which fell severity; but towards thee Goodness.* And *Rom.* 9. 13. *Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*: The reason whereof is, *v.* 15. *Because I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion, on whom I will have compassion.* The sole cause then why God shewed greater bounty to *Jacob* then to *Esau*, was a free determination of his own will, without the intervention of any extrinsique motive to incline it: For *v.* 11. *the Children were yet unborn, and had done neither good nor evil, that the purpose of God according to Election* [or choice] *might stand.* The Argument suggested by the Apostles Discourse, beside his express resolving Gods Beneficence into his free-will, is this, that if the flowings forth of Gods Goodness were necessary, then *Esau* must have been blest with as great expressions of favour as *Jacob*, because there could be no cause, that could make a difference: Not Gods Goodness, for its exertions being necessary, it would stream forth equally into equal Capacities, and therefore if they were equally capable, the emanations of the divine

Goodneſs muſt have been equal, ſo that there was nothing could put a difference, unleſs the Perſons themſelves, but the difference was made before they could make it, *viz.* before they were born, or had done any good or evil, but were in all reſpects equal. The Spirit of God has recorded in Scripture almoſt as many inſtances of his ſeverity, as of his clemency, becauſe the exerciſe of theſe contrary vertues depends on his free will, which being indifferent to either, ſometimes diſplays the one, and ſometimes the other; whereas thoſe attributes that are Phyſical and Neceſſary, are determin'd one way antecedently to the determinations of his Will.

From all which premiſes, we ſee (1.) that Gods benignity, goodneſs, and beneficence, conſiſt in a gracious Propenſity to let forth the Communications of his fulneſs to his Creatures, which being lodged in the Divine will, does not only ſuppoſe its freedom, but is alſo ſubject to its determinations, ſo that though it may incline, yet it cannot either command or deſtroy its liberty, becauſe if it ſhould, it would not only interfere with Gods moral accompliſhments, but would withal be inconſiſtent with it ſelfe. And therefore it rather approaches to the nature of a habit ſeated in the Divine will, then to the condition of an Eſſential faculty; whence a habit and cuſtome of goodneſs and clemency are

frequently

frequently attributed to God in Scripture, but only acts and single instances of severity; for though contrary habits cannot lodge together in the same faculty, yet single actions of the one may sometimes issue from that Power, in which its contrary is entertained: and therefore though the expressions of Gods bounty be his usual and constant work, yet he sometimes lets forth the eruptions of anger and severity, though with some unwillingness and reluctancy: for (*Lament.* 3. 33.) *He does not willingly* (or from his heart) *afflict the children of men*; and therefore the holy Ghost (*Esa.* 21. 21.) stiles it his *strange work*, as if by reason of its seldom exercise, he were unacquainted with it: so that though Gods inclinations to acts of Beneficence and Goodness be vastly great and vigorous, yet they are free, and depending upon the determinations of his will, and are upon this score consistent with Gods dealing sometime with us by more severe and rigorous measures, which God is pleased at certain seasons to dispense according to the unsearchable Counsels of his own will. (2.) That the Communications of Gods goodness consist in the use and exercise of his Dominion, for the good and benefit of his Creatures; for they being all originally nothing, all the advantages they enjoy to render their condition more desirable then Non-existence, are the free gifts and effects of Divine goodness, which being

ing free and unconstrained, has distributed its favours with an infinite variety, having made innumerable kinds of Beings, and endued them all with perceptive faculties and capacities proportion'd to their respective natures, and provided suitable objects in order to their gratification, so that although he has, according to the free pleasure of his own will, created some in a more imperfect state then others, yet he has provided liberally for the happinesse of them all, having furnished each order with objects agreeable to their respective faculties, in the perception and enjoyment of which, consists all pleasure and satisfaction.

Now, if we will measure how large and ample the communications of Divine goodness are, they are as vast as free, *Psal.* 145. 9. *The Lord is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all his Workes.* Psal. 38. 5, 6. *Thy goodness (O Lord) reacheth to the Heavens, and thy faithfulness to the clouds. Thy Righteousness is like the great Mountains; thy Judgments* (or works of Providence) *are a great deep; thou preservest man and beast*, &c. *i. e.* Gods goodness is of equal extent with his works, as vast and wide as the Universe, running through all parts of the Creation. But to speak only of that goodness which concerns our selves: how free and unstreinned have been the expressions of Gods bounty to mankind? Not to mention the pleasures and enjoyments

joyments of life it ſelf, in which the Divine munificence has made proviſion, not only for our neceſſity, but for our delight and curioſity too; nor the great variety of perceptive faculties he has endued us with; nor the innumerable inſtancies of his Mercy, Clemency, Patience, Long-ſuffering towards the ſons of men, his ſlowneſs and unwillingneſs to puniſh, and his readineſs to pardon our Impieties; nor his demanding only ſuch homage and ſervice from us, as cannot be more our duty, then tis our happineſs, with infinite more ineſtimable vouchſafements, and expreſſions of his tenderneſs and good inclinations towards mankind. I will only inſtance in his rewarding that obedience that is our debt, with ſuch great and ineſtimable bleſſings, *viz.* not only earthly and ſecular, but ſpiritual and eternal pleaſures: He might have ſent us into the world to act our parts a while, and have endear'd our duty to us only by its own appendant delights, and then have remanded us back into our pre-exiſtent ſtate of not being: But that he ſhould recompence the bare diſcharge of our duties, with the rewards of Heaven and Eternity, is ſuch a ſtupendious height of goodneſſe, as not only puzzles conceit, but outreaches wonder and admiration. And yet that which enhances the value of the Reward, is not more its greatneſſe then its freeneſſe, though ſome are ſo arrogant as to challenge a natural and

neceſſary

neceſſary right in it: Arrogant, I ſay, becauſe if it were our due, we muſt derive it not from Gods goodneſs, but from our own deſert, for nothing beſide Gods goodneſs, can create us a right to future happineſs, but our own Merits, which from a Creature to its Maker implies the greateſt contradiction. And if in any reſpect Heaven be our due, God would be obliged by the natural meaſures of Equity to beſtow it, and ſo our happineſſe would not derive from the free grant of Divine goodneſs, but from the prime and intrinſique Laws of Juſtice. For if there were any natural and eternal neceſſity that Happineſſe ſhould wait on Vertue, that the Vertuous are happy, would be no thanks to the Divine favour, becauſe that cannot be an act of favour, which is demanded by Juſtice and natural Right. And therefore thoſe paſſages in Scripture, that ſeem to make our future reward juſt and due, ſpeak upon ſuppoſition of Gods gracious Promiſe and Covenant with mankind, as *Heb.* 6. 10. *For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work & labour of love, which ye have ſhewed towards his Name.* 2 Tim. 4. 8. *Henceforth is laid up for me a Crown of Righteouſneſs, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, ſhall give me at that day; and not unto me only, but unto all them alſo that love his appearing.* In which, and other paſſages, the aſſured hope of our future reward is therefore argued from Gods

Justice, because 'tis essentially just that he should perform his Promises, and therefore, although Gods Promise or Covenant were not an act of Justice, but of Grace, (for 'tis impossible for God to enter into any Covenant with his creatures, but a Covenant of Grace) yet its performance, when made, is absolutely just and necessary, and that in which God cannot fail without gross deceit and falseness, he having engaged his Veracity to discharge all the debts of his Grace. And therefore (as some learned Men have noted) this Justice in Scripture is promiscuously expressed by Justice, Truth, and Faithfulness, *Rom.* 3. 3, 4, 5. they are all used to express the same thing; And 1 *Joh.* 1. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*; Because if he be just and faithful, he will perform his Promise.

If I were to prove the necessity of future Rewards and Punishment, from the nature of any of the Divine Attributes, I should rather fetch my Arguments from the Attributes of Wisdom then any else; because they are (as might easily be evinced) so hugely useful, and well-nigh necessary to the Government of the World; whence the *Rabins* reckon Paradice and Hell among those seven Pillars, upon which they say God founded the world, supposing it could not subsist without them: But yet no one sort of means being absolutely ne-

cessary

cessary to Almighty Power and Wisdom, in order to any end, God could have found out infinite ways to engage us to obedience, though he had never acquainted us with future Rewards and Punishments. So that whatsoever Rationalities may be drawn from the Divine Attributes, to prove a future state, yet it depending wholly on the Divine will, and the Divine will being absolutely free, we can have no rational inducements to bring us to any sufficient knowledge of it, but by a clear Revelation of the Divine will, and therefore God (to compleat the Instances of his Goodness) sent the blessed Jesus into the world to bring life and immortality to light, and to encourage us to Vertue and Goodness by greater Rewards then were before proposed to mankind. So that though we could enhance the expressions of Gods love and bounty to mankind, to their utmost pitch and value, yet we have just reason to conclude, that the peculiar and unequal'd eminency of the Divine benignity, consists not so much in the greatness, as in the freeness of its Emanations, as streaming forth from a fountain of free and self-moving Goodness.

Of the Preexistence of Souls.

THough the foregoing Discourses are as useful and important Theories as any in Divinity, (there being not any other Articles so universally interested in Theological Speculations as these; nor any thing that has occasioned so much Errour and Ignorance in other points, as false and confused conceits, concerning these two grand Attributes of Dominion and Goodness:) Yet they cannot be more important and concerning in themselves, then they will be useful and necessary for the successful management of this ensuing discourse against Preexistence; because the most plausible Argument alleadged, on behalf of this Hypothesis, is grounded upon such mistaken notions of the Divine goodnesse, as I have already (I think) evidently enough disproved in what I have discoursed concerning that Attribute; so that I am so far before hand in the Dispute, as to have prevented the strongest Objection I am liable to be Assaulted with. This premised, I immediately proceed (1.) to give an account of the Hypothesis it self, and the grounds on which it bottoms; and then (2.) to give in my exceptions both against it and them. And that you may be sure of my faithfulness in the first, I will perform it as near as I can, in the very words

of

of its most Peremptory assertours. Their account then is this,

That the Souls of men are not then first produced, when they are united to the Bodies prepared for them by generation, but were created all at first in an incomparably more Blessed and Divine Condition of Life, then that they are now condemned to in this sad Region of sin and misery, but that at several times and occasions by their Revolt from God & his righteous laws they forfeited their better life and condition, and so were thrust down into these terrestial Bodies, partly to be punished for their former prevarications, and partly that by acting their parts well here, they might recover that more happy state from which they lapsed into this. And this they endeavour to prove,

1. from the nature of Divine Goodness, which (say they) is constrained alwaies to do what is best; for the Souls of men being capable of eternall existence and happiness backward as well as forward, and it being much better that they should have enjoyed the pleasure of their life and actions from eternal Ages, then either to have layn so long in the comfortless night of nothing, or to have been at first created in so mean and wretched a condition, as that is which they suffer in this Region of Death and Misery; and then God being infinitely good and gracious, and infinite Goodness, doing by the same

same necessity that which is best, as infinite fire will necessarily burn whatever is combustible, if put to it, it clearly and unavoidably follows (say they) that they must have existed of old before they came into these Bodies.

2. From the Actions of Providence, which will not otherwise correspond to those holy Attributes in the Deity, Righteousness and Benignity, according to which he Governs and Orders the affairs of all the World. And this Argument they make use of two waies, *viz.* in respect of the place and time wherein we are born, and of the temper and disposition of the body, wherewith we are born.

As to the first of these, there is no man doubts but that education, institution, and company, are of such wonderful moment to the making us good or bad, as that where vice and wickedness are in use and practise, there seems little less then a necessity of swimming down in the stream of our Countrys Vices: And then the greatest part of the World having been always over-run with all manner of Lust and Barbarity, for God to send out of his pure and holy hands an immaculate soul, capable of living elsewhere, and fit for all virtue and heavenly Wisdom, into an habitation in such parts of the Earth, where reigns nothing but grois Ignorance and Vice by which she cannot fail without a miracle

racle to be over-born, what is this, say they, but to betray his own off-spring unto unavoidable miseries?

As to the second of these they argue thus, seeing there are in mankind strange & fatal propensities to all manner of vice & wickedness, that flow from the very intrinsick constitution of their Bodies, how can it be consistent with the Goodness and Righteousness of God, the blessed spring of all virtue and Holiness, and tender lover of all his Creatures, to put innocent souls into such foul and untamed bodies, which so fatally and necessarily hurry them to that which alone of all things in the world he disapproves of, and which he knows will be their utter bane and miserable ruin.

And here some of them argue more particularly from the absurdity of the two opinions of the souls immediate creation, or seminal traduction; for if it begins neither of these ways, it must have preexisted, therefore (1) against the first of them, they use the forementioned Argument, viz. that it seems inconsistent with the Goodness and Benignity of God, to put pure and immaculate spirits into such Bodys as will presently defile them, pervert all their powers and faculties, and incline them to all manner of vice and impiety. And then (2) against the second, viz. seminal Propagation of souls, they argue from the nature of the soul it self, for

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(say they) if the soul be generated then it must be made of the soul of the Parent, which is against the nature of an immaterial Being, the cheif propertie of which is to be indiscerpable. These are the most material considerations urged in behalf of Preexistence, others that either depend on these, or are less considerable, I shall have occasion to mention as I proceed, and withal, to replie to a few passages of Scripture, that for the better countenance of the business, they press to serve in the cause of this Controversie. Having given you this brief, but comprehensive account of the Hypothesis it self, I now proceed to give in my Exceptions.

First then, although I am not oblig'd by vertue of what I have discoursed in my fifth exception against the Platonick Philosophie, to oppose this Hypothesis by Counter-arguings, because 'tis out of the sphere of Humane knowledge, and to be ranked among *Epicurus*'s τὰ δυνατὰ καὶ τὰ ἐνδεχόμενα, things meerly possible, and meerly contingent, and so is sufficiently confuted by destroying the grounds on which it stands, yet, to render my Triumph over it more full and entire, I shall make my first onset from an objection drawn from its ill corresponding with the divine Attributes of Wisdome, Justice, and Goodness, and that upon a twofold account.

1. In that it supposes God to inflict the severities

ties of his Justice without attaining the ends thereof; for to what purpose is it to inflict penalties upon any Person for offences, of which he is as ignorant, as he could have been, though they had never been committed? For assign they what ends of Justice they please, this is most undenyably certain that to punish a guilty Person, that is invincibly ignorant of his sins, is as far from attaining the ends of Justice, as to inflict the same Punishments upon one that's guiltless, for if he has no knowledge of his miscarriages, he has the same reason to be faultless in his own esteem as he that is really so: But for God to chastise with the rods of his vengeance any Creature that is in the same condition with the Innocent and guiltless (in reference to the ends of Justice and Punishment) bids not a less defiance to the Reputation of his Attributes, then to inflict the same Punishments upon one that never deserved it. I conclude therefore that if the calamities of this life were inflicted upon us only as punishments of sins committed in another, Providence would have provided some effectuall means to preserve them in our Memories; and therefore because we find no remainders of any such Records in our minds, 'tis (I think) sufficient evidence to all sober and impartiall enquirers, that our living and sinning in a former state is as false as inevident.

2. In that it would be an invincible Temptation to mankind to have hard and jealous thoughts of Gods dealings with them. For when they see themselves environed with miseries and punishments, and feel the heavie strokes of divine Anger, and yet are utterly ignorant that they have offended him, what more just and reasonable grounds can they have not only to call in question but flatly to denie his Goodness and Equity. For if it will not comport with Gods Righteousness and Benignity to place us in these sad Circumstances we are in, unless thereby to punish us for our former prevarications (as the patrons of Preexistence fiercely and clamorously contest) when we know our selves to be in this sad plite, and yet are utterly destitute of all knowledge how we deserved it, what can we more naturally infer, then that God has, contrary to all the Laws of Justice and Equity, made us Wretched and Miserable? Should he take the most lewd and debauched Vilain upon Earth, and thrust him into the Dungeons of endless misery, but withal take away all sence and memory of his former state and wickedness, would not that miserable wretch have just reason to exclaim against the Cruelty of his Maker, as supposing himself created in that sad & deplorable state? And suppose it possible for God to have produced any being in the same miserable condition the damned

in Hell are supposed to suffer, that wretched Creature might as well argue from a State of Preexistence, in which it had deserved the Torments it endures, as any other being, that finds it self in that forlorn condition, but is deprived of all knowledge of any former scene of Life? Now God cannot in Reason expect we should acknowledge his Justice and Righteousness contrary to his actings, and therefore if he has inflicted upon us those Calamities, that cannot justly be inflicted upon any but Sinners, and yet not let us know we are such, what else can we conclude but that we innocents are unjustly doom'd to the sad and miserable Portion of the Wicked? Perhaps it would not be difficult to invent many other not inconsiderable Objections, but these are all that occurr to my thoughts at present, & all those I have met with in Authors are most lamentably frivolous and impertinent. And therefore I shall immediately pass on to the main and only needful part of my Task, viz. to evince the Groundlesness of this Hypothesis I oppose, for if I can shew the Ratiocinations from whence they conclude its Truth and Reality to be apparently vaine and frivolous, I shall thereby sufficiently evidence the vanity of the Hypothesis it self, as being built upon vain and trifling Pretences. But before I descend to their particular Examination, it will not be impertinent to observe,

1. That it would be no difficult task to erect other much different or quite contrary Hypotheses. Methinks that purely Phisical account which *Porphiry* some where gives of the Souls descent into these Terrestrial Bodies, is as neat and handsome as the Origenian or Moral one, for as this derives our lapse Originally from our voluntary and chosen Immoralities, that other derives them meerly from a Physical necessity, which it illustrates by this similitude. As a fruitful field, though it may for a certain period of years yield good Grain, yet at length it is exhausted and grows barren, and then if it be laid fallow though it brings forth nothing but weeds and tares, yet it thereby recovers its ancient vigour and fruitfulness; so our Souls having been for many ages impregnated with the seed of Divine Ideas, by degrees spent themselves in bringing forth large returns of contemplation, till at length their Intellectual powers decaying, the higher part falls into a swoon, and they can exert no acts but of Imagination, whence spring forth the powers of the Vegetal life, which cause in them strong and irresistible propensities to an union with these inferior and terrestrial Bodies, in order to the awaking of the higher Powers, for because every thing in the Etherial Regions is too calme and serene to awake them, they are therefore conveyed into this place of noi-

ſes and diſturbance, and inveſt'd in a body full of rude and impetuous paſſions, by which they may be chafed into life and ſenſation again. Or what if I would, out of a perverſe humour of contradiction, aſſigne a quite contrary Hypotheſis of Preexiſtence, and as they will have this world a place of Puniſhment, and maintain the Soul came into it by lapſing from a happier and more excellent condition, ſo why may not I aſſert that 'tis a place of Reward, and that God ſends us hither to reward our vertuous actions in a lower and leſs happy condition of life, or that they that had miſcarried in a weaker and leſs advantageous ſtate, might once more try their fortunes in better and more advantageous circumſtances? Which Hypotheſis would be as much, and perhaps more conſiſtent with it ſelf, then the contrary. For ſeeing they will needs have it the deſign of Providence, in thruſting the Soul down into this Region of Miſery, to amend and reform, as well as chaſtiſe it, it ſeems much more conſonant to effect this, by raiſing it to a more perfect ſtate, then dooming it to a worſe, for 'tis a very prepoſterous way to Reformation, to put the ſoul into ſuch fatal propenſities of ſinning, (as they ſay 'tis in here;) this being the directeſt courſe utterly and irrecoverably to undo it. And now had I a mind to ſet up for a Maker of Hypotheſes, (which you ſee is but an eaſie trade) I might

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so trim and adorn this with artificial and affected Phrases, and so support it with a set of Theorems, Pillars, and Fundamental Principles, as to make it appear a competently handsome and well built Structure. And withal, I think it would be able to stand the shock of those Objections and Counter-evidences, that would shrewdly shake, if not utterly demolish the Origenian Hypothesis: But if any Origenist shall disapprove my Hypothesis, I only challenge him to confute it, for I am sure the like arguments will confute his own: and therefore to shew him the Vanity of inventing groundless and imaginary Hypotheses, I will be so crosse-grain'd as not to abandon mine, as long as he shall persist peremptory in his.

2. The second thing I am to observe, is, that they (which is the usual oversight of unwary disputants) dispute not more against their Adversaries then themselves, in that the Arguments they use to destroy all other Hypotheses and confirm their own, do as evidently oppose it as them. For their own account of our descent into this world is, that 'tis onely a merciful provision and contrivance of the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of God (the end of all whose Councils is his Creatures Happiness) *to put lost and delinquent Souls into a capacity of acting their parts anew, that so, so many of his excellent creatures, might not be lost* and

Lux. Orient. p. 41.

and undone irrecoverably, but that they might be in a condition to recover the old happiness of their Celestial state. Now is it not highly derogatory to the infinite and unbounded Wisdome of God, *that he* should detrude those souls, which he so seriously designs to make happy, into a state so hazardous, *wherein he seeth it to be ten thousand to one, but that they will corrupt and defile themselves, and so make themselves more miserable here, and to Eternity hereafter?* A strange method of Recovery this, to put them into such a fatal necessitie of perishing. 'Tis but an odd contrivance for their Restauration to happiness, to use such means to compass it, which tis ten thousand to one but will make them infinitely more miserable. This is such a contrivance of Mercy, that puts us in a worse condition, then it abandons the Devils to, for if the conditions of our Recovery be so near being impossible, our state is as bad as theirs, and if the non-performance of these conditions be punisht with greater penalties, 'tis worse. Better be abandon'd to an eternal dispair, then have hopes to be rescued onely by such means, as 'tis ten thousand to one but will exceedingly encrease our Torment and Misery. Again, *If we call to mind the sad accounts we have met withal in History, of times and places almost all the world over, over-run with all manner of barbarity and lust, adopted even into their Laws, and practised*

The Account of Orig. &c. pag. 27.

practised in their most solemn Religions, how can we but think that the Soul then and there born and living, is inevitably condemned to all Iniquity and Impiety? But can we imagine that infinite Wisdom seriously purposes to restore us to our ancient Holiness and Purity, when it places us in such a state, in which we are inevitably condemned to all Iniquity and Impiety? If God had contrived to betray us into all manner of vice and wickedness, how could he more effectually have accomplish't it, then by putting us into such a condition, as should inevitably condemn us to all Iniquity and Impiety? That Father would take a strange course to reform a debauch'd and wretchless Child, that should go about to effect it by abandoning him to the Society of Rogues and Villains. Pag. 28. *For God therefore to send an immortal Soul* (whose happiness is his greatest design and contrivance) *into an habitation in such parts of the Earth, where reigns nothing but gross ignorance and vice, by which she cannot fail without a miracle to be over-born, what is this but to betray his own off-spring (for he is the Father of Spirits) unto unavoidable misery,* whilest he pretends to plot and contrive their happiness, *and so govern the world with less prudence, then an ordinary discreet man would do.* Once more in their own words, Pag. 35. *I would aske them whether or no the condition of our nature considered, the strong inclinations naturally to that which is evil,*

evil, and these strengthned and further confirmed for several years before we can come to have any considerable use of our Reason, or arrive to any command over our selves. Lastly, the way and manner how the Elections of our will are performed, which we never find free, where there is a custome or passion against it, and how corporeal motions determine the thoughts and passions of our minds; I ask them whether these things being considered, it be not hundreds to one odds, that we shall choose the ways of Vice rather then Vertue? Or let the proportion be as little as they can with any colour pretend, they cannot clear the Wisdom and Discretion of Divine Providence by their Hypothesis, which thrusts the Spirits (it intends to make for ever happy) into so great a danger of being defiled and corrupted by the passions of the Body, and of soundly smarting for it hereafter. Thus you see what strong Objections, the Arguments they urge with most noise and clamour, are against themselves, if therefore these Phænomena be inexplicable without the Origenian Hypothesis, they are so too with it; and if so, then the result of all is, that they are not so much Arguments of Preexistence, as Aspersions of Providence. For whatever Hypothesis is true, they charge Gods Transactions with mankind either of Injustice or Folly; and therefore I shall attempt this solution not so much to oppose the Hypothesis of Preexistence, as to vindicate the Divine Pro-

vidence from so many contumelious and unworthy Reproaches. After these more general considerations against the Hypothesis it self: I come now to a particular Examination of the Arguments on which 'tis founded.

First then, as for that strong Demonstration (as they stile it) taken from the Nature of Gods goodness, which they suppose constrain'd to do always that which is best, 'tis so fully, not only answered, but confuted, in what I have already discourſed, of the nature and extent of Gods Goodness and Dominion, that to subjoyn any formal Reply, would be but a needless and troublesome Repetition. For having made it apparently evident, that any state, better then that of Non-existence, may be the object of Gods Dominion, and the effect of his Goodness; every condition of Being, preferable to that of Not-being, is not onely consistent with the Divine Goodness, but a Product of it; and therefore if they will make good this Argument drawn from the Divine Goodness for their Hypothesis, they must first either disprove the Truth and Validity of my preceding discourses, or else make it appear that the condition of Souls in this life is more deplorable and less desirable, then the state of Annihilation. And when they shall have done either, they will deserve a farther reply, but not till then.

And

And yet I cannot forbear to super-add this one Consideration more, viz. that the boundless Infinity of the Divine Goodness is consistent with the existence of different Ranks and Orders of Creatures, God being not constrained to make every Creature the most Perfect he can, for then there would have been but one sort of Beings, viz. the highest and most consummate Rank of all, whereas we see the World replenish'd with divers species of Creatures, some more, some less perfect. Now, if notwithstanding the Infiniteness of the Divine Goodness, there may be various kinds of Creatures of various and unequal Perfections; then what necessity or Reason imaginable is there, the Divine Goodness should be constrain'd to let forth its largest Emanations to mankind; for why may not our species be of an inferiour Rank in the Order of Beings? And if so, then what necessity is there we should be endued with all possible Perfections? Are there not several Ranks of Spirits or Immaterial Beings? And are not the Assertors of Preexistence the most Zealous Patrons thereof? And do they not Marshal the Souls of Men in one of the lowest and most imperfect Orders, as being united to the grossest and most ignoble Body, viz. Terrestrial matter, whilst all the rest reside in Bodies of Aire or Æther? and therefore for men to deem the Divine Goodness less infinite, because its Communi-

cations are not so great to them as they are to others, is as absurd as it was for the Figs in the Fable, that complain'd to *Jupiter*, because he had not made them Grapes. Again, why might not all these several Ranks of immaterial Beings be at first created in the same estate they are in at present, without lapsing from a higher to a lower condition of life, as well as several sorts of material creatures, which were at first disposed in the same order they still hold? If God could, his Goodness notwithstanding, create such an innumerable variety of Insects, which are but imperfect and half Animals; then why might he not also, notwithstanding the same Goodness, create among spiritual Essences a species not more perfect then humane Souls? For if the boundlesness of Gods goodness does not hinder but that some Creatures may exist in a much more imperfect Condition then others, then neither can it hinder but that the Souls of men might be placed in a much lesse perfect condition then other immaterial Beings. From all which it follows, that it cannot with the least pretence of Reason, be argued from the Nature of Gods Goodness, that the Souls of men did once preexist in the happiest state, which Beings of their Nature are possibly capable of enjoying. As for their Arguments taken from the Providence of God, their whole force Centers in this

one difficulty, that God has not taken sufficient care for the happiness of his Creatures, but has left them too obnoxious to Sin and Misery: now to assoil and clear this Objection, I need only evince that the Divine Providence has made not only sufficient but large provisions for the Happiness of Mankind. But I shall not be content naked[ly] to answer their Objections, unless I can confute them too; In order to which, I shall endeavour to do these two things, (1.) To propose a plain and easie Hypothesis, that gives a rational and satisfactory account of all the forementioned Phenomina of Providence. And then (2.) To shew that Mankind is not only endued with such Faculties, by the use whereof he may arrive to the highest degrees of Virtue and Happiness; but also that we have the greatest Endearments and Advantages in the world, to engage and assist us in a diligent and vigorous prosecution thereof.

My Hypothesis is this, That it has pleased Providence to place mankind here in an immature and more imperfect state, that so we might in a way congruous to free and rational Agents, by degrees be fitted for, and at length arrive at a better and more raised condition of life. As in nature all things commence their Beings in a rude and immature state, and make orderly progressions, to farther degrees of maturity, till they arrive at the utmost

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perfections their Beings are capable of; so is mankind Created and born into the World as it were in the Spring, in a Budding and Blossoming season, that so we may by proceeding forward in the differing Periods of our lives, grow up to higher and more excellent Capacities, till at length we ripen into a state of maturity and perfection. Our natures are at first somewhat rough-cast, to the end that they might be refined and polished by Vertue and Religion; so that 'tis the main (and perhaps only) designe of Religion to perfect and advance our Natures, and make us capable of a higher and more noble condition of life. Now I need not declaim and expatiate upon the neatness and consistency of this Hypothesis, when we know by experience that 'tis the way and method pitch'd upon by Providence to conduct mankind to its Perfection, it being an Oeconomy hugely agreeable to all the designes and purposes of Religion, the Natural tendency whereof is to raise us to higher Capacities and nearer approaches to the Divine Nature. This gives a more general Reason of the present, low and imperfect condition of mankind, but that I may give a more certain and perspicuous account thereof, and more close to the main Origenian objection (*viz.* why God should put pure and immaculate Souls into these disorderly Brutish Bodies) I shall make my Hypothesis more distinct and particular.

Man-

Mankind then is an order of Beings placed in a middle state between Angels and Brutes, made up of contrary principles, viz. Matter and Spirit, endued with contrary Faculties, viz. Animal and Rational, and encompass'd with contrary Objects proportion'd to their respective faculties, that so they may be in a capacity to exercise the Vertues proper and peculiar to their compounded and heterogenial Natures. For the perfection of humane Souls does not consist in an effeminate Beauty, and Physical proportions, but in a manly courage and moral accomplishments, as at the Olympick Games there was no regard had to Beauty and Neatness, they only were capable of honour and reputation, who had courage and patience enough to combate. And the life of man in this world is nothing else but an Olympick exercise, God having placed us here not to admire the native Beauty and Perfection of our Beings, but to exercise our selves in the conflicts and difficulties of Vertue; therefore the worth and praise of the Soul, consists in a Bravendis and Gallantry of Spirit, when it scorns to be usurp'd upon by those faculties that ought to obey her, and checks and controules all their unruly and tumultuous exorbitances by her own sovereign and imperial Laws, and resolutely defends its own Authority and Prerogative against all the furious and rebellious attempts of Passion

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and Concupiscence. And therefore though humane Souls be capable of subsisting by themselves, yet God has placed them in Bodies full of brutish and unreasonable Propensions; that they might be capable of exercising many choice and excellent Vertues, which otherwise could never have been at all; such as Temperance, Sobriety, Chastity, Patience, Meekness, Equanimity, and all other Vertues that consist in the Empire of Reason over Passion & Appetite. Religion is common to Men and Angels, appertaining to them purely as Spirits, but Vertue is proper to man alone, and belongs to him as a Being made up of contrary principles, whence spring contrary desires and inclinations, in the good or bad Government whereof consists the Nature of Vertue and Vice, & upon this score 'tis that Vertue is never attributed to God, because being of a simple & purely spiritual nature, he has no unruly passions and sensual Appetites to Govern.

And therefore the Platonists, though they place all Intellectual Vertues [illegible] in the abstracted Soul, yet they will have all moral ones reside [illegible] in the Composition, denying the naked Soul to be capable of moral Good or Evil, these belonging only to the whole which results from Soul and Body; [illegible] sayes *Plotinus*. And this (by the way) is their meaning, when they unanimously resolve that grand perplexing enquiry

quiry into the terrestrial *Hyle*; because our material Principle, by reason of its intrinsique dulness and stupidity, naturally hinders and obstructs the intellectual efforts of the mind, and inclines it to the love of material and sensual objects, which if it suffer it self to be so far immerst into matter as to persue only or chiefly the satisfaction of its gross and sottish Propensities, thence naturally spring all those Irregularities that pass under the name of Moral Vices. And this account of the Origine of Evil, is not so devoid of Reason, as some Learned men would perswade us. For (1) it does not (as is objected) make matter to be essentially evil, but rather the occasion thereof from its extra essential union with the soul. Nor (2) does it make the existence of evil natural and necessary, for it dos not assert that it results from the nature of matter (as they would make us believe) but only an accidental effect thereof after its union with the soul, in that from the sluggishnesse of its nature, it inclines the soul to the love of gross and material objects; and if the soul be so careless as to yeild to its inclinations, it becomes the voluntary cause of its own evil. But you will think my Pen very unruly if it be so apt to flie out into Digressions, when 'tis in so great speed, and therefore I return.

Now because the nature of Vertue consists in

the minds governing the Brutish and Animal appetites and motions of the body, Providence has furnish'd it with instruments convenient for that purpose; for having its principal and commanding residence [illegible], where the Nerves that convey all motions and impressions backward and forward, have their Original, 'tis able by its immediate influence upon them to command and bridle all the Animal motions of the Body. Thus because all excess of Passion consists in an irregular motion of the blood; the Nerves (which the soul uses as its reins) are twisted about the veins and arteries, that so by contracting them, it may be able to refrain and check the Impetuosity of the Bloods motion, and consequently curb the eager and unruly passion; as when for example such an object is presented to us, that naturally provokes to anger, which mainly consists in a violent ebullition and fervor of the blood about the Region of the Heart, which violently hurrying from thence into the Brain, disorders the motions of the Spirits there, and so by confounding the phantasms that lodge therein, disturb all its conceptions and operations; then does it concern the Soul to abate and cool this unruly heat, which is effected by restraining the violence of the Torrent, which is effected by its influence upon those Nerves that are the passage and high way from the Brain to the Heart. And therefore

the Providence of nature has made a peculiar passage for commerce between the Head and the Heart in Man, where it has made none in Beasts, *viz.* whereas the *Præcordia* of Beasts are furnished with nervous branches only from the *Par vagum* to supply the vital functions with spirits, in man there are peculiar large branches, derived from the *Intercostal Nerve* into the same region, only for a way of commerce between the Brain and the Heart, and passage of the Animal spirits from the one to the other, as need shall require. In so much that we may define Prudence and Virtue to be nothing else but a due commerce between the Brain & the Heart (which *Plotinus* only expresses more abstractedly, when he describes it to be συμφωνία ἐπιθυμητικοῦ πρὸς λογισμὸν) of which the fore-cited machless Author supplys us with a clear Example, *viz.* that dissecting a Changeling or Natural Fool, the chief defect he could discover in him was, that this *Plexus* of the *Intercostal Nerve*, which is proper to the body of Man, and is the way of commerce for the Animal spirits between the Heart and the Brain was exceeding small, and its branches very thin. By reason whereof, his Soul could have but very little command over his Passions and Appetites, in the impotency and irregularity whereof consists the nature of Folly.

V. *Willis* Cereb. Anat. *cap.* 26.

The result of all is this, that mankind is compounded of contrary Principles, endued with contrary desires and inclinations, to the end that there might be an order of Beings in the world (without which there would perhaps have been one Species wanting to compleat the Universe) capable of all those Heroick Vertues, which consist in the Empire of Reason over the brutish and sensual Faculties. As also that by the right use and emprovement of our superiour Powers, we might be raised to greater Capacities, and qualified for higher and more divine Accomplishments. So that man seems to differ from the Angels only in this, that he must by conquest and industry win the happiness, which is entail'd on their Natures; for when we become ἰσάγγελοι in our dispositions, we shall be made so too in our enjoyments; the Divine Goodness having graciously appointed, that when the Soul is so far advanced in Vertue, as to live above the reach of all its Passions and Desires, that then it shall be translated into a more free and disintangled state, where it shall be neither enticed nor vex'd with the importunity of these lower and bruitish Appetites, but shall enjoy the Serenity and Pleasures of a pure and intellectual Being, as the Reward of its former Pains and Industry. As on the contrary, when any man suffers his Passions and Brutish Appetites

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to beat Reason out of its Throne, and to run headlong into an ungovernable Anarchy, he degenerates from humanity, grows incorrigible in sin, and sinks so deep into the Animal life, as to be made uncapable of acting Vertuously, and suitably to the ends of his Being; and thence is congruously doom'd to the Portion of degenerate and apostate Spirits, as being fit for nothing else. So that the whole design of Providence, in sending us into this world, is only that we may in a way congruous to rational Agents, prepare our selves for another; and therefore the Souls of men shall at their departure hence, be stated in a condition proportion'd to their good or bad Qualifications. I am apt to be positive and dogmatical in this Hypothesis, not so much because it gives a rational and satisfactory account of Gods sending pure and innocent Souls into Bodies full of brutish and irregular Inclinations, as because it exactly agrees with the Condition of our Natures, with the natural tendency of Vertue and Religion, and with the whole Oeconomy of Providence in conducting mankind to their future happiness. Not to mention its consonancy with Saint *Pauls* Hypothesis, in his Account of the Civil and Intestine War between the law of the Mind and the law of the Members.

And now having laid my Hypothesis, I come to shew (1.) that mankind is endued with such faculties,

culties, by the use whereof, he may attain to the highest degrees of Vertue and Happiness; (2) that we have the greatest endearments and advantages in the world to push us forward to a diligent and vigorous Prosecution thereof. And if Vertue and Happiness be in our own power, and if we are invited to pursue and endeavour after them by the greatest endearments and perswasions, then certainly Providence has placed us in a sufficient capacity of being happy, and if it happen that we should at last be abandoned to Misery, we must owe it to our own choice and prodigious folly.

1. First then, Mankind is furnished with such faculties, by the use whereof he may arrive at Vertue and Happiness. To evidence this, I require no other Postulatum, then that which is the great foundation of all Religion and Morality, *viz.* that the Mind of man is endued with Reason and Understanding, able to discern the essential differences of Good and Evil; and with Liberty and Election, able to choose and pursue the one, and eschew the other. This (I say) is a *Postulatum* so just and evident, as that it cannot be denyed without destroying not onely the Nature of Good and Evil, but of Man himself; For if in any thing we differ from Brutes, 'tis in the Reason and Liberty of our minds, all our other faculties we have in common with them, 'tis these alone that are the peculiar

Prero-

Prerogatives of humane Nature, and therefore without them we may be Sheep or Oxen, but not Men;

——————Separat hæc nos
A grege mutorum, atque ideo venerabile soli
Sortiti Ingenium, divinorumque capaces,
Atque exercendis capiendisque Artibus apti,
Sensum à cælesti demissum traximus Arce.

However these are the efficient Causes and necessary Foundations of all Morality; for no Action can be morally Good or Evil, but what we can choose, and concerning which we can deliberate, because without them all our Actions would be either Casual or Fatal, and the meer Issues of Chance or Necessity, and by consequence, as uncapable of being moral, as those motions that result purely from Mechanical Powers, as I have already (I think) demonstrated, in what I have discoursed concerning the Freedom of the Divine Goodness. And now, if the mind of man be a deliberative and elective Principle, able to discern between Good and Evil, Happiness and Misery, and to choose the one and refuse the other, then 'tis at its own choice, and in its own power to be Vertuous and Happy; for no body questions but that Goodness and Happiness are much more eligible then Vice and Misery, and therefore if men are able to discern, and choose that which is best, their Hap-

Happiness and Misery depend upon their own wills and their Portion, whether good or bad, is the result of their own choice; and certainly they that can be vertuous and happy if they will, are in a fair capacity of being so.

From hence it follows, that the mind and rational part of man is Superior and Predominant, not only endued with Power, but also invested with Authority to Govern the inferiour and brutish part, which is of a slavish and servile nature, and made to obey. Reason is uppermost, and has the bridle in its own hands, and is strong enough to manage the wildest and most untractable Passions. There's no appetite within us uncontroulable, no inclinations so strong and fatal, which reason cannot master; natural Propensities can only tempt, but not command our Souls; they may encline, but cannot force them; and our minds are never vanquished, but when they betray themselves. Briefly, none of the charms of Concupiscence are so powerful and irresistible, but that Wisdom and Discretion can easily dissolve and disenchant them. The Truth and Reality whereof, I thus Argue, Either the rational Part of man is able to command the lower Appetites, or 'tis not; if it is, then is he sufficiently able to live well and happily, because Vertue and Happiness are obtain'd by living up to Reason, and being conducted by its Laws and measures;

sures; and therefore if our superiour Powers are able to give check and controule to our brutish Lusts and Passions; 'tis in our own Power to attain to vertue & happiness. But if the Superior part be not strong enough to Govern the Inferiour, it destroys the very Being and Existence of Good and Evil, and renders mankind utterly uncapable of Goodnesse and Morality. For (1.) our Irrational faculties are unanimously acknowledged to be uncapable of Moral goodness, because they are acted purely by a necessity of Nature; and their Exertions, like the Appetites of Brutes, and the Motions of Artificial Engines, result meerly from the Mechanical Powers of Matter. And hence 'tis that our *Imperate Actions* (*i. e.* those that do not issue immediately from the Will it self, but are exerted at its command, by some of the inferiour faculties that owe it subjection) are devoid of all moral Capacities, as considered abstractedly in themselves, or as proceeding from their immediate Cause, and without respect to the wills Authority, because when so considered, they are not free and voluntary; and therefore their being Morally good or evil, is entirely derived from the Will, because they act only in obedience to its Commands. Nor (2.) would our Rational faculties in this case, be capable of Morality, as being fatally determined by the stronger and irresistible motions of Lust and Passi-

on; But the Actions that proceed meerly from force and forreign Violence, are of all others least capable of being moral, because they do not only not issue from a free and self-determining Principle, which is the greatest and most necessary foundation of all Morality, but also because they are not at all determined from their own Principle, but are forced thence barely by the Power of an exterior Agent. Besides this, the moral Goodness our Superior faculties are capable of, would consist in their Commanding and Governing the Inferiour, but if they are not able to master and rule them, they cannot be supposed to be enjoyn'd to governe them, because nothing can be obliged to impossibilities; and therefore if our Superior Powers are commanded to govern the Inferiour, they must have strength enough to do it. Wherefore, howsoever fatal and boisterous our Brutish propensions are, if there be any such thing as Religion and Moral goodness in the world, they must be subject to the command and discipline of our Superior and Governing faculties. From all which 'tis evident, by a plain and undeniable deduction, that mankind, notwithstanding the force of their brutish Inclinations, is placed in a fair capacity of living well & happily, which utterly destroys all the forementioned Arguments alleadged from this Phænomenon of Providence, on the behalf of Preexistence.

As

As for the other part of their Argument, taken from the customary Vices and Impieties of the World, *viz.* seeing that Custome and Education have a great influence upon the manners of men, to make them good or bad, as also that the greatest part of the world has been always over-run with all manner of lust and barbarity; for God to send an Immaculate Soul into an habitation into such parts of the Earth, where reigns nothing but Vice and Wickedness, by which she cannot fail without a Miracle to be over-born, is to betray his own offspring unto unavoidable Misery. 'Tis an objection sets too mean a value upon humane Nature, and supposes mankind no better then Mushrooms, as if all men were but so many Engines moved by the wheels of Custome, and had not faculties within them able to discern of the good and evil of Customes, as well as of other things. I confess custome has acquired great Power and Authority over the life of Man; because the lives of most men are disposed of by chance and casual Principles, they pursue those things with which custome presents their Fancies, without ever deliberating of their Goodness and Decency. You know who has Pictured mankind comming into the World upon Hobby-horses; and truly (Sir) the Emblem would perhaps have been as true, if he had represented most of them going out so. *Seneca* long since com-

plain'd, that the World was not govern'd so much by Reason, as by Custome; Men accounting that most Honest, which is most in Practise; and Error when it becomes Publick, becomes Truth. Custome is almost every where so confident, as to outface Reason, and charge it of singularity, as indeed the Wisest men are the greatest Rebels to her Usurped Empire, whilst she rides upon the shoulders of the People, who are almost universally, not only, her Slaves, but her Idolaters: For the rude and vulgar sort of people, every where, judge of things barely by their conformity to the Modes and Fashions of their own Country, and esteem all forreign Customes and Usages inept and barbarous, purely for their disagreement with their own Domestick manners; and therefore I account the Boors of *Attica*, and the common people of *Greece* (in its most refined age) not less barbarous then the wild and unpolish'd *Scythian*, because they were equally Idiotical, and lived by no other Rule then Prescription, preferring the Customes of *Greece*, as the Standard of Decency, and judging of the goodness of things by their Correspondence with the Manners and Fashions of their own Country, and condemning all strange and forreign usages of barbarity, because they agreed not with the Municipial laws and customes of the Town they lived in. But the plain and evident Reason of all this is, be-

cause

cauſe the Idiotical ſort of Mankind are Fools, and live below the dignity of their Natures. For certainly Reaſon ought to take the upper hand of preſcription, & men that are *wiſe* & *conſiderate* (*i.e.* thoſe that live as becomes men) will examine the nature & reaſonableneſs of cuſtoms, & not relie upon their Warrantie till they are ſatisfied of their Goodneſs, and adopt only thoſe which they judge to be innocent and laudable. Opinion is the guid of Fools, and to yield ones ſelf up to the Government of Cuſtome is one of the the groſſeſt inſtances of Folly; and 'tis but a ſilly Apologie for fond or vicious Practices, to plead that 'tis the Cuſtome of the World: For no man can tamely reſigne up the Authority of his Judgement to the power of this little Monoſyllable Tyrant (as *Eraſmus* according to the quibling wit of his age terms *Mos*) unleſs he renounce his allegiance to his Reaſon, & live the life of *brutes* that alwaies follow one another for company. And therefore if Cuſtome be the Empreſs of the world, tis becauſe men delight in ſlavery, and abandon their Liberty to live in Chains, for if they would continue faithful to their own faculties, and own no other guide but their Reaſons, (which doubtleſsly is the prime and fundamental duty of mankind) they would ſcorn to ſuffer themſelves to be oppreſſed and impoſed upon by ſo filly a thing as Cuſtom. So that if men would but live ſuitably

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to their Rationall Natures, the corrupted and vicious manners of the Age and Place they live in, could have no Influence upon their Practices; for Custom is a thing without us, of the good or evil, whereof we are as well able to judge, as of other things, (for we are not Parrots, but men born with rational Faculties) and therefore if we impotently permit our selves to be seduced by it, we act unworthy the Faculties God has given us, and so deservedly forfeit the Happiness that is due to our Rational Nature. Here I might argue that if mens Reasons were not able to bear them up against the Torrent of their Countries Vices, it could be no crime to be borne down by the violence of the stream, but I have already prevented my self in this, in what I have argued concerning the predominancy of our Rational Part over our lower Appetites; for how great soever the power of Custom may be, it cannot be more forcible then natural Inclinations, and 'tis much more easie to devest our selves of superinduced habits, then to alter that which is radicated in our Natures; and therefore if we are able to correct the Vicious inclinations that flow from the structure and composition of our Bodies, we are much more able to reclaim or quit those vicious habits, we have contracted only by casual and accidental usages. We esteem it indeed a mighty business for any man to discharge his mind from the

the prepossessions of Custom and Education because 'tis so rarely practised; but if we consider the nature of the thing it self, nothing can appear more easie and practicable; in that all men are endued with rational and reflecting Faculties, and no action costs less pains then a reflecting thought, and nothing more obvious and palpable then the different Natures and Consequences of Vertue and Vice; and therefore every man that does not choose a stupid In-advertency may with an ordinary dilligence disabuse himself from all the false and groundless Preconceptions of a customary Belief; Superinduced disciplines may corrupt, but cannot evacuate our natural Faculties, and therefore though they may delude and inveagle our Infant Reasons, yet when we are grown to an Age capable of Rellishing morality, 'tis then as easie to cashire all absurd Customs, as it was before to be cajol'd by them. As the Earth may steam forth vapours gross enough to cloud the Sun, and for awhile check the radiations of his light, yet the *energy* of his Rays will at length vanquish, and in spite of all their Resistance break through the thickest of those benighting clouds, and enlighten that Globe, which endeavour'd to darken him; And thus though Custom, Prejudice, and Education, may for a while cloud our Understandings, and intercept the displays of our Reasons, yet so prevailing is

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their innate Brightness and Vigour, that (unless we our selves stifle their emanations) they will both discover and dispel the grossest delusions.

Having hitherto treated of the Forces within us, I come now to discover our Auxiliaries without, and to shew that as we are endued with Faculties, by the use whereof we may attain at Virtue and Happiness, so also that we are aided and assisted herein by the greatest endearments and encouragements in the world, which is the next Theme I proposed to discourse of.

As Pleasure then is mans chiefest good, so Virtue is his highest Pleasure, the Divine Goodness has made it our duty to be happy, all the restraints that God has tied upon Mankind are so many engagements to confine them within the compass of their own Happiness, and whatsoever lies beyond the lines of our liberty, lyes beyond the limits of our content, and to transgress them is to step into continual hazzards & disquietudes. The divine Wisdom has made the Portions of Vertue & Vice to be as distant as their Natures, having entail'd on the one nothing but Sorrow and Calamity and on the other nothing but Joy and Satisfaction. The evil effects of evil Practices are so spontaneous and natural, that though there were no superinduced Penalties, Wickedness would be its own Executioner. *Malitia ipsa maximam partem veneni sui bibit;*

bibit; every vice exacts the Pennance of its own folly. All Criminal Pleasures conclude in Repentance; and if men would but resolve to pursue only ἡδονὰς ἀμεταμελήτους, pleasures that expire not in Repenting (which is all that *Socrates* prescribed for the making men both vertuous and happy) we should soon see wonderful alterations in the lives of Men in spite of all those fatal Propensities, concerning which the Patrons of Preexistence make such Tragical Declamations. Tranquility of mind and Indolency of body, are the most natural, most easie, and most durable pleasures in the world, these two combined together, compose the most sovereigne and standing delight of the life of man: And that man that is so expert in moral Wisdom, as to be able out of the Mass of all his transient delights, to extract health and contentedness, is as happy as this world can make him: And yet 'tis the very designe of all moral Virtues, first to render us capable of this state and then to procure it. Whereas they that intemperately indulge to their transient delights, because they are more sensual, do but exchange constant stable Pleasures for perishing uncertain ones, and such as conspire to create lasting and permanent miseries. And therefore *Epicurus*, who having cast their Providence and the Souls Immortality, was consequently obliged to discard all moral Goodness, yet set as high an estimate

upon Vertue as any Philosopher of them all, because he apprehended it so highly conducive to Indolency of Body and Tranquility of Mind, in which alone he expected his sovereign Felicity: so big a lye is it that he placed mans supream Happiness in Bruitish Pleasures.

If in any respect Vertue and Religion intrench upon the liberty of our Natures 'tis in the Instances of sensuality, and yet in these there is no other restraint laid upon us, then that we live by the Rules and Measures of nature; and the Natural Appetites of a Man are temperate and reasonable; Nature desires nothing but what's useful and convenient, and its satisfactions are as innocent as necessary: So that whilst we follow the dictates and appetites of humane nature, we do nothing contrary to Vertue and Religion: But when the Man is divided from the Beast, and his Reason separated from the inferior and Bruitish Appetites, then arise irregular and unreasonable desires; but these proceed meerly from the bruitish part, and are preter-natural and violent to the man; so that till we abandon Reason and the better part of our selves, Lust is a violence to our Natures and so far from gratifying our natural Propensities, that 'tis their greatest contradiction. But if we should suppose that Vertue consisted in a perpetual Violence to all our Appetites and Inclinations,

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yet its future reward being so great and glorious, there is no advised and reflecting man, but would exchange a short satisfaction of his present desires, for the hopes and assurance of Infinite felicities hereafter. It must be a strange piece of Folly and Indiscretion to prefer the enjoyment of a short, cheap, imperfect delight, before the hopes of the Joyes of Heaven and Eternity: For sensual gratifications are so low & unsatisfying that to want them can amount but to an inconsiderable miserie, whereas the future pleasures that entertain our hopes are as great as endless; and therefore to miss them must needs be the saddest disaster man can suffer. So that though I should grant the object of our hopes to be inevident & uncertain, yet any man, that acts beyond the Indiscretion of a Child, will rather choose to forego the present Enjoyment of cheap and little pleasures, then the probable hopes of the greatest and most satisfying Felicities: For the naked hope and expectation of so great a Blessedness, is more pregnant with present content and satisfaction to the mind of man, then the enjoyment of the highest and most exquisite delights of sense. But when the wayes of Virtue are so pleasant, reasonable, and advantageous in themselves, as though they procure, yet they need not promise the Blessings of another world, and yet are so endeared to us by their inestimable appendant re-

wards, as to make them delightful, though they were unpleasant in themselves, then certainly are they recommended to our choice by the strongest motives and allurements that can work upon a Rational Nature. Though the Prosecution of this Argument be as pleasant as 'tis copious, yet (beside that I have not now leasure to pursue it through all its particular instances) the *Pulpit* has of late afforded enough excellent discourses upon this *Theme*, to supercede the necessity of any farther Performance of it. But if you desire to see it discoursed of in a more Philosophick way, I refer you to *Tully's* Books *de Finibus*, where 'tis as Rationally as Largely asserted by *Torquatus* the Epicurean. And now, If Humane Nature be endued with Rational and reflecting Faculties, if it be most natural and easie for these Faculties to choose and pursue those objects that are most agreeable to their own Natures, and most conducive to Humane Felicity; If Vertue be most natural, easie, and reasonable; if it be endear'd to us by present and future delights; If vice be contrary to the Nature, Interest, and Reason of men; if men have all the inducements and Persuasions in the World to pursue Virtue and Goodness, and as great discouragements to scare and deter them from the Prosecution of Vice and Impietie; if I say these things are so, then I appeal to all Mankind whether the Divine Providence can

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be justly charged for leaving them too obnoxious to sin and misery. But I easily foresee that you will enquire, if all men have such pregnant engagements to Vertue, what is the Reason of the almost unanimous viciousness of mankind, and that when they have all the Reason in the world to engage them in an indefatigable pursuit of Goodness? whence comes it to pass, that they should with so much eagerness thwart both their Reason & their Interests for the love of Vice and Wickedness. I answer, that though sensual Inclinations, false Principles, vicious Examples, and wicked Customes, may be inducements and occasions of it, yet the only proper cause is the wilful or stupid Inadvertency of men. Inconsiderateness is that (as the *Rabins* speak) the *root* whence all mischeifs grow: 'tis the spring & head of that torrent of wickedness, that has always overflown the greatest part of the world. For if men would but look to the end of all criminal Pleasures, they would easily discover in them much more to avert, then to entice and court their Passions; but when their Appetites are passionately set upon them, they grow wild and impatient, and will enjoy though they know 'tis death and misery they embrace. That no man miscarries but by brutishness and inconsideration, I might demonstrate out of my pretedent discourse; for if every man be endued with Rational faculties; if he

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can reflect upon the Essential differences of good and evil, together with their natural Products; if he can observe what things tend to his dammage, and what minister to his advantage; And if it be most apparent that vertuous Practices are infinitely more conducive to the interests and happiness of man then Vice and Luxury; then what other Reason can possibly be assigned, why men are so unanimously vicious, but only because they are wilfully or carelessly unreasonable? But I need not put my self to the Charge of an Elaborate Dispute to prove a thing that is evidenced by the surest and most obvious of Demonstrations, *viz.* an Induction of particular Instances. For if we consider the single Obliquities of every Individual man, 'tis not only easie to observe how they descended from carelessness and inadvertency, but also to convince the man himself, that had he but reflected upon the natural results and events of his Criminal actions, he would never have committed them: Take the peevishest Humorist in his hottest and most transported fits, and ask him whether it was not in his own power to have refrain'd the folly of his Impatience; I never yet met with any person so unreasonable, whom I could not at length force to own them as avoidable Indiscretions; but if any person should be so cross-grain'd as to plead a brutish necessity, it were very easie by laying afore him the circum-

circumstances, upon which his Anger kindled, to convince him that the Provocation was not intolerable. How few are so wise as to avoid a fruitless grief and anxiety for past, and therefore not avoidable disasters? And yet what proposition in *Euclid* more pregnant with conviction then this, that 'tis the absurdest folly in the world to grieve for losses and misfortunes; in that nothing can be more evidently irrational, then by labouring in matters gone and irrecoverable; to double our miseries to no purpose? And what Councel can be more unquestionably rational then the Advice of the Son of *Syrach*, about Mourning for Deceased Freinds. *Take no grief to heart, for there is no turning again; thou shalt not do him good, but hurt thy self*, Eccles. 38. 17. And yet all men are so foolishly inconsiderate, as upon such contingencies, to afflict themselves with a grief equally fruitless and troublesome. What Vice assaults us with more peremptory and importunate Temptations then Intemperance, yet any man that will be but at the pains of a Thought, to represent to himself its unpleasant and direful consequences, cannot but confess, that its invitations are so far from being irresistible, that no man can comply with them without the imputation of the most apparent Madness and Folly. For who but Mad-men can be enamour'd of Gouts, Dropsies, Catarrhs, Consumptions, broken Sleeps, restless

Nights,

Nights, loathing Stomacks, and every thing that is destructive of health or life? And that these uneasie Symptomes are the natural Appendages of Intemperance, both Philosophy and Experience assure us. Whereas Temperance is a healthful and delicious Vertue, moderate diet creates no indisposition either to the Body or the Mind; the Temperate man rises from the Table light and chearful, and truly relishes the pleasures that the Epicure designs; But Luxury, as it adds nothing to the pleasures of Temperance, so it both afflicts us with a present dulness, by loading the Brain with crudities, and lays up materials for future diseases, by loading the blood with raw and indigested humours. Though I am not so Stoically vaine, as to vye Power and Majesty with Kings and Emperours, yet sure am I that all the sumptuous Entertainments of Pallaces, afford not such exquisite dainties as are serv'd up by Temperance; Constant satiety makes us loath the most refined delicates, whilst hunger prepares such sawces, as *Apicius* with all his witty Gluttony, could never taste of; and therefore *Epicurus* (that great Exemplar of a Philosophick Temperance) was wont to say, that give him but Hunger, Pulse, and Water, and he would vye delicates with *Jove* himself. Now certainly, if men would but represent to themselves the troublesome Appendages of intemperate eating

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and drinking; no morsel could appear so delicious, or wine so pleasant, which they could not with much less trouble forbear, then suffer all the uneasie symptoms of a tired and overloaded Appetite. And although this is obvious from every days experience to every mans observation, yet how few are they, that can stint their Appetites at the necessities of Nature, though they are certain that all they devour beyond the satisfaction thereof, ends in surfet and oppression, only because most men are so bruitishly foolish, as to sacrifice all the contents of their lives to a moments tickling of their Palates, and like Beasts, grow wild and impatient to enjoy a trifling pleasure, which they know will expire in loathing and restlesness.

The Mass and Community of Mankind, is but an Aggregate of Individual men, of whom the common and mechanical sort of people (a word of a vast extent) are incomparably the greater number, who yet are utterly senseless and inconsiderate, and suffer themselves to be disposed of purely by chance and accidental Principles, and are so prodigiously regardless, that they will not put themselves to the trouble of thinking, whether the usages Custome has taught them, are wise and rational. And hence it is that they are always floating between contrary Vices, and are not a less contradiction to themselves then to Vertue; one while they are base and ser-

vile, another proud and insolent; now stubborn and refractory, anon inconstant and changeable; envious and malicious, yet sordid and senseless to honour; credulous and talkative, yet morose and sullen; ignorant and stupid, yet censorious and scornful; Idolaters of custome, yet Seditious and desirous of novelties: and hence as they chance to be swayed by custome, or any accidental emergencies, they rowl to any extream without setting *bounds* to their unruly progress; and if they be suffered to run without restraint, they will break down all the banks of Law & Government; and therefore tis the main wisdom and policy of Governors (who are deputed by *Divine Providence* to understand and consider for them) to check the violence of the Tide, by swaying them *backwards* by contrary *laws*, & to keep them fluctuating between both Extreams, & so by alternate Fluxes & Refluxes, to preserve the Common-wealth from popular Inundations. Thus they must be kept from sinking into too much ignorance, or rising to too much knowledge in matters of ---- for the former renders them salvage, which is apparently destructive to Government; the latter makes them proud, conceited, and zealous, that breeds contempt of Governours, and sets them upon headless plots and designs of Reformation, that usually proceed to Rebellion, and end in a deluge of civil Wars, as the experience of all ages

 suffici-

sufficiently attests, and our own too sadly demonstrates. But the Reason of all this, and much more, is because they are unreasonably wilful and inconsiderate, for nothing but inadvertency distinguishes them from the wise and understanding part of mankind. To conclude therefore; if a sottish and regardless stupidity be the proper cause of every single obliquity (of which every man will be satisfied, that shall consider of every actions particular circumstances) 'tis evident by a very easie Inference, that all the wickedness in the world must be its effect; For the cause of every Individual, and the whole species is the same, and therefore if every particular sin be the effect of Inadvertency, all sin must be its issue.

Of which the wisest and most experienced of men, was long since eminently sensible, whence it was that he has so earnestly recommended to mankind consideration and advertency, for the wisdom, he parabolically represents in his Book of Proverbs, imports nothing but consideration, discretion, and weighing of things in opposition to that folly, and stupidity which betrays men to those immoralities, from which he there so assiduously dehorts the sons of men. And that this is the only true and genuine sense of that Book, any one that shall but read it over with a mind clear of those rash and unwarrantable glosses Commentators have fastned upon it,

it, will easily acknowledge, both by the Tenour of the discourse, and by the original signification of those terms, by which he expresses the wisdom there Celebrated, and chiefly by those peculiar Properties he attributes to it, many whereof can very hardly be applied to any thing else. And now, if folly and inconsiderateness be the Origine of the general and unanimous Apostacy of mankind, then judge whether their crime be not of all others (not excepting even Peevishness and moroseness themselves) the haimousest and most inexcusable, for beside that 'tis aggravated by all the circumstances that can enhance its guilt, nothing can be baser and more unworthy of a man; for if the dignity of humane nature consists in Reason, then certainly nothing can be more bruitish and unmanly then to abandon its use, and thereby to disrobe our selves of our highest Prerogative, to renounce the Glory and Priviledge of our Natures, and in defiance of our Creatours Goodness, who made us Men, to prefer the condition of Bruits and unreasonable Creatures, and in a word to dismount our Reasons, that Providence has placed in the Sadle, that the Bruit might Ride the Man.

Thus (*Sir*) have I replyed to, and clear'd off, the main Ratiocinations urged on behalf off Preexistence, and have not declined or shuffled of any Argument for its difficultie, but have been careful

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that the Account I have given you might be as faithful as satisfactory: If therefore I have omitted any objections, 'twas not because I could not, but because I need not answer them, either upon the score of their being too inconsiderable, or of their entire dependance on the Arguings I have here encountred; and therefore having undermined and ruin'd their Foundation, I suppose it would be but a fruitless and impertinent piece of service to beleager them by a particular onset. I have (Sir) so strong an antipathy against all Impertinency, that in all enquiries I have the patience only to examine the most weighty and considerable reflections, after which the less concerning matters will as little want as merit Consideration, and therefore I have not only waved all their pretty gay Probabilities, apprehending them subjects too frivolous for serious and rational discourses; but have also forborne all Duels or Personal Combats, having all along only opposed the Hypothesis, not its Patrons; for I have taken no notice of the particular miscarriages of any Adversary, and have no where objected the Inconsistency either of any Author with himself, or of more of them with one another, unless where it is apparently the fault of the Hypothesis, and not the oversight of the Men. For I must confess (Sir) I am so far from quarrelling either with the Ancient or Modern Patrons of Preexistence, that I peculiarly

culiarly esteem and honour them as Persons more then ordinarily Learned and Ingenious; and therefore though I might perhaps have triumphed over some weak passages of particular Authors, yet I have scarce been less careful to pass by their weakest then I have been to assault their strongest objections.

The most remarkable things I have purposely omitted are those conclusions they draw from the Nature and Substance of the Soul, all which I have slighted, because we are so utterly ignorant of the nature of the Soul that 'tis impossible to deduce any sure & solid Speculations from it: 'Tis I know as easie a busines to imagine Hypotheses concerning things, whose natures are placed beyond the Reach of Humane Inquisition, as 'tis for the *Ros-Crucians* (for the confirmation of their Frenzies) to tell us of strange Books, Monuments, Inscriptions found in the inmost and remotest parts of *China*, *Japan*, and *Tartarie*, because in such stories they are secure from all Contradiction. But the difficultie is to give us evidence of the Truth and realitie of their Conjectures; For when they have contrived and polish'd a neat and ingenious Idea of the Soul, how can they assure either me or themselves of its agreement with the thing it self? And therefore of them that pretend to acquaint the world with true and real notions of its Nature,

Nature, I demand by what means or methods they attain'd their knowledge; for if they came by it in a Rational way, they are able to shew by what steps and Ratiocinations they arrived at it, but because this they have never performed, they must give us leave to look upon their Hypotheses as the meer Issues and contrivances of their own Fancies. 'Tis not therefore enough to coyn Ideas of the Soul, and stamp it, with what essential Characters and Properties they please, unless they can assure us of their real Conformity to the thing it self (it being otherwise precarious and uncertain) but as no such assurancew as as yet ever given, so when I consider the waies and methods of gaining acquaintance with the Natures of things, I despaire that it ever will: For though I may by Rationacination obtain a clear and certain evidence of the Real Existence of many things, of the Essential Ideas whereof I am utterly ignorant, yet am I assured by diligent and impartial Trials, that all the Objects and Ideas I could ever with all my Industry understand were conveyed to my mind through the Organs of sense. But whether any certain knowledge of the Nature and Substance of the Soul be attainable or not, I am sure 'tis as yet undiscover'd, and so altogether unqualified to be the Ground of any true and certain Knowledge, in that where the first and Fundamental Principles are inevident, all the

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Ratiocinations depending on them (how coherent soever in themselves) must of necessity be so too. And therefore, for Instance, when they conclude against the seminal Propagation of Souls, because 'tis one of the prime and cheifest Properties of a Spiritual essence to be indiscerpible, they argue at a high rate of confidence and impertinency, because, though perhaps the soul may be indivisible, yet they are not able to produce the least tollerable Evidence thereof, being utterly unacquainted with its Nature and Essence; and then though perchance it may be indiscerpible in its primary and central substance, yet who knows but it may, as well as the Body, have its seminal Excrescencies? I am not more concern'd for the Hypothesis of seminal Traduction, then for the other of Immediate Creation, for they are both to me equally uncertain, and consequently indifferent. For as the only material objection they assault the former with, is that groundless one I but now mention'd, so they object nothing singly against the latter, but its inconsistency with the Divine Goodness to place pure and spotless souls in such evil and sad Circumstances, as environ us in this life; but this objection as it equally concerns all the Adversaries of Preexistence, what other soever particular Hypothesis they adopt, so 'tis already abundantly answered. So that 'tis not at all material whether the reality of either or neither

ther of the forementioned Hypotheses be sure or evident, for notwithstanding all that is objected either of them may, and therefore 'tis of no concernment which is.

And now (*Sir*) though both my Patience and my Pen begin to fail me, yet am I obliged as well by my Promise as my Method, to consider the most plausible passages of Scripture the Patrons of Preexistence alledge on behalf of their Hypothesis; but the application of the Texts, they produce to their designe, is so lamentably forced & frivolous, that it will scarce excuse a serious answer from being useless and impertinent. I know not any one Theological speculation, that cannot boast of more Favour and Countenance from Scripture, then this pretends to. And if you will but parallel the Periods of Scripture made use of, in a small Pamphlet you have, to prove *Mulieres non esse Homines*, I am confident you will discern so vast a disproportion in their evidence, as to acknowledge that if the latter may be accounted probable inducements, the former will amount to Demonstrations. And therefore perhaps I may render my self not less ridiculous by encountring them with a serious Reply, then that grave Dutch Doctor, who has with mighty transports of zeal opposed himself to that waggish Pamphlet, and has conjured up all his Dutch or Systematick Ortho-

doxy to confound that blasphemous Heresy as himself stiles it. But having begun, I must to avoid all suspicion of shuffling, plunge through: And though their Scripture-evidences do not merit a refutation, yet through some mens Ignorance and others Partiality they need it. Had I been left to my own choice, I should not have at all concern'd the Authority of the Divine Oracles in this dispute. For so sensible am I of that violence and injury they suffer from our presumptuous forcing them to be parties in our own trivial and imaginary speculations, that I am exceedingly averse from making any use of their suffrage unless it be in matters of grand importance, and with all very evident and consonant to its main intendment. 'Tis the fashion amongst Opinionists to Argue in a reversed order, first they contrive Opinions and then Arguments, they adopt Hypotheses, and then suborn Testimonies out of the sacred Volume to vouch them: like *Chrysippus*, who (as *Laertius* records) was wont to say, that he only wanted opinions to vent, but would never want Arguments to defend his opinions. And thus the Asserters of Preexistence seem first to be enamoured with the Pretiness of their Hypothesis, and then to seek out for Scripture expressions to countenance it. For all the testimonies they alledge would never have afforded the least intimation of it, had it not first prepossest their Fancies:

Fancies: Of which some of them are so sensible as to confess, that though they do not perswade their Hypothesis, yet they are applicable to it. But I wish they could name any opinion, howsoever vain and unwarrantable, that cannot boast as much; what's more easie then for Fancie to make pretty applications of Scripture to purposes vastly distant from its own, especially if we consider how large and miscellaneous a composure the Holy Volume is? They who are acquainted with the Customes and Tenets of the Modern Jews, know what pretty Analogies they fetch from Scripture to abet their fond and ridiculous usages, indeed their prettiness is so odd and surprising, that were it in any other matter, they would be as delightful as impertinent.

But tis time to advance to a closer and more particular engagement, the few hours that remain obliging me to a quick and (I fear) overhasty dispatch: but before I clear off the Texts they objects, I will represent a passage or two on my own behalf. And first methinks that's a shrew'd one *Rom.* 9. 11. *For the Children being not yet born, neither having done either good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth.* They that were not in a Capacity of doing either good or evil before they were born, neither existed nor sin'd before; But neither *Jacob* nor *Esau* were

in a capacity of acting well or ill, before they were born into this life, and therefore nor they, nor (by consequence) any others preexisted. For (1.) 'tis too pittiful a shift to say that all other men, *Jacob* and *Esau* only excepted, were in Being before their Appearance upon this stage of life. And (2.) 'tis most expresly against the whole designe of the Apostles Argument; the Purpose of whose Discourse is to shew that Gods vouchsafing greater Instances of his Favour to *Jacob* then to *Esau* proceeded not from any extrinsique motive of greater merit in him, but purely from the free determination and beneplaciture of his own will, ἐκ ἔργων but καὶ ἐκλογῆς τοῦ θεοῦ. Now this he proves because the Choice was pitch'd upon before they were born, and so before they had done either good or evil. But if the souls of men had been in a capacity of acting morally, before their descent into this life, then has the Apostle argued at a strange rate of inconsequence, when he concludes that Gods different dealing with *Jacob* and *Esau* depended not on their own Actions, because the difference was resolved on before they were born, and consequently before they had done good or evil. If therefore the Apostles conclusion be consonant to the Laws of Inference, it must be unquestionably certain that the Souls of men never acted before they were born into these Bodies.

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There are a brace of Texts more, that I conceived would, without any torturing, give in evidence against Preexistence, but I find that its Patrons have already suborn'd them to speak in their Cause, and therefore I that am a modest man must be content to give up my Right in their Testimony, and to Encounter them as objections. The first is our Saviours reply to his Disciples enquiry about the man born blind, *Joh.* 9. 3. Neither has this man sin'd nor his Parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. In which words he expresly affirms, that that mishap was not inflicted upon the man as a Penalty for any miscarriages he had been guilty of in any former state, but that it was design'd by the Divine Providence upon a special score, namely, that he might be a fit object to evidence our Saviours miraculous Power. And yet from this very passage they argue with no small confidence against us, in that the question supposes the man might have sin'd before his Terrestrial Birth, and that the Hypothesis of Preexistence was an Opinion much in Vogue among the Jews, and therefore when our Saviour had so fair an occasion of rectifying the common beleif, and yet said nothing against it, his silence is almost as argumentative in favour of it as a positive Approbation. I answer (1.) 'tis far from being evident that the Disciples question supposes him

because such their Wickedness was now lost in oblivion & their

him capable of sinning before his birth? for might they not, if they had any notions of the Divine Prescience, suppose that God foreknowing what kind of person this blind man would prove, had antedated his punishment. Or why might they not intend his Original sin, which the Jews supposed to be the [illegible] in every individual man; so that when they enquired whether the man was born blind for his own or his Parents sin, they might only ask whether that particular Judgment was the effect of any miscarriage in his Parents, or of his own original Pravity. (2.) It was not the Preexistence, but the Metemphychosis or Transmigration of Souls that was the common Opinion of the Jews; 'tis stiled by the *Rabins* [illegible] *the Revolution of Souls* in opposition to their [illegible] *Revolution of the Dead*, whereby they meant the Rowling of the Carcasses of Jewes, (that happen to be interred in the polluted Earth of the Gentiles) through the secret Caverns of the Earth to *Palestine*, where they believe all Jews shall arise at the last Resurrection; and hence some of them have in their old age travelled to the Holy Land to lay their Bones there, to avoid the disturbance of their Subterraneous Pilgrimage; and *R. Salomon* tells us the Reason why *Jacob* charg'd his Son *Joseph* to conveigh his Corps from *Egypt* to *Canaan*, was partly that his dust might not afterwards be

this is all absurd

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turn'd into Lice, (a cleanly old man!) and partly to escape the trouble of this posthumous Journey. But their impertinencies tempt me to be so too. Now that the opinion of Transanimation obtain'd among the Jews, is proved from the testimony of *Josephus lib. 2. de Bello Jud. cap. 7.* where he relates among the dogmata of the Pharisees, that the souls of good men did not perish, but did μεταβαίνειν εἰς ἕτερον σῶμα; and *Tisbi* relates that 'tis the common opinion of the Circumcised Doctors that every Soul animates three Bodies, which they (after their usual rate of arguing) prove from that passage in *Job* 33. 29. *All these things God worketh with man,* שׁוּב שׁוּב *tribus vicibus.* And by vertue of this Vicissitude, they assert the Soul of *Adam* to have inform'd the Body of King *David*, and that the Soul of *David* will by secret Revolutions, wind it selfe into the *Messiah*, which they think is clearly intimated by the word אדם being compounded of the Initial Letters of *Adam* א, *David* ד, *Messiah* ם. As also that those two mighty zealots *Phinees* & *Elias*, were animated with the *same* spirit because of the *resemblance* of their Zeal; and that *Labans* Soul was translated into *Balaams*, *Abels* into *Seth*; and *Abravanel* that bold Jew asserts, that it was *Esau*'s Soul that possest our Saviour. *Manasse Ben Israel* cites several of their old Books and Authors to this purpose. And therefore, if this passage proves any thing, it

proves

proves too much, viz. not onely the Preexistence, but also the ἀποκατάστασις or perpetual revolution of Souls: For if they can infer any thing in favour of Preexistence from our Saviours silence in so apt an occasion to have rectified the common Errour concerning it, they may with the same reason conclude his Approbation of the Transmigration of Souls, this being the common Opinion of the Jews, and so as probably implyed in the Disciples Quere. (3.) It was not our Saviours custom to take notice of every impertinent Question, much less the suppositions on which they relyed. Thus when his Apostles asked him, *Acts* 1. 6. *Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel*. Though it was an important Question, and bottom'd upon a grand and dangerous mistake, he makes no reply to it, but only takes occasion thence to discourse of matters of a widely distant nature, but that more closely toucht their concerns. And therefore nothing can be fairly inferred from our Saviours silence; especially when he had replyed so fully to the direct scope of the Question, there was not any necessity he should take notice of the Theories it collaterally implied: And if the Hypothesis of Preexistence were so principally implied in the main scope of the question as is pretended, then is it exprelly enough destroyed by our Saviours plain and unlimited Negation. To conclude, he had as

good

good ground to take occasion from their Enquiry, to discourse of the Equity of punishing Posterity for their Ancestors sins, it being one of the main Phænomena of Providence, and of as grand importance as they can presume the Hypothesis of Preexistence to be, and yet, notwithstanding the fairness of the opportunity, and the weightiness of the subject, 'tis evident he took no notice of it. The other Resembling Passage I meet with in *Job* 38. 4. where the Almighty undertakes to pose *Job* through all the Phænomena of Nature, and among other particulars of the true Origine of things, and to convince him of his ignorance, he tells him he was so far from being acquainted with it, that he was then shut up in the dark state of Non-existence, *Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth*, &c. Now, if all Spirits had been in Being when the foundations of the Earth were laid, as our Adversaries conclude from the ensuing words, *When the morning Stars sang together, and all the Sonnes of God shouted for Joy.* By the former whereof (say they) is intended the Angels, by the latter the blessed untainted Souls. But if this gloss were as true as 'tis precarious, then *Job* might have justly replied to the Almighty, that himself was present among the Sons of God at the laying the Foundations of the earth, and joyn'd in that great and unanimous Acclama-

tion. And then the Almighty having discourſed of each particular myſtery and contrivance of Nature, he concludes with this baffling Ironie, *Knowest thou them becauſe thou waſt then born, becauſe the number of thy days is great?* And yet they conclude from hence for Preexiſtence, becauſe the 70 render it without the Interrogation, *I know that thou waſt then born, for the number of thy days is many.* A various Reading may ſerve for a ſubterfuge to eſcape the force of an objected Teſtimony, but certainly 'tis a pitiful Argument that relies barely on the Authority of a Verſion, when it not only contradicts the Original, but the plain deſign of its own Context. For if *Job* had then been born, how could God have convinced him of his unacquaintedneſs with the Origine of things, becauſe he was not then in Being? ſo that unleſs Reaſon it ſelf be out in its Logick, our Adverſaries are.

Having thus gain'd back theſe Texts to our ſide, I paſs on to the reſt of their objections. And firſt, as for that paſſage *Jer.* 1.5. urged with ſo much Jewiſh confidence by *Manaſſe Ben Iſrael*, *Before I form'd thee in the Belly, I knew thee; and before thou cameſt forth out of the Womb I ſanctified thee, and Ordain'd thee a Prophet unto the Nations.* It implies nothing elſe but Gods deſignment of *Jeremy* to the Prophetick Office; for his knowing of him im-

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ports in its native and most unstrained sense, meerly his foreordaining him to that employment, and then his sanctifying of him signifies in its genuine and most proper use, only the separating or devoting of him to that peculiar Office, which is exegetically expressed in the last branch of the Period, *I ordained thee to be a Prophet.* Besides, this passage is peculiarly applied to the Prophet *Jeremy* in opposition to any other, but should it have referred to his Preexistence, there had been no peculiarity, forasmuch as God would not only have known him, but the whole Mass of mankind before they were formed in the Belly. And now what shadow of favour do these words cast upon the Origenian Hypothesis, No man could ever have discern'd the least colour for Preexistence here, whose mind was not aforehand tinctured with its belief. Here's not the least foundation for an Argument, unless this supposition were first laid, *viz.* That God cannot foreordain a Person to any special employment before he exists. And therefore to conclude, that because God had consign'd *Jeremy* to the Prophetick Office before he was born, that therefore he preexisted, is an Inference fit for none but a *Rabbi*, and upon that score I have taken notice of it only as his, though other men have urged it with as great a grace as he.

And for that passage, *Phil.* 2. 5. *Let this mind be*

in you which was in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not think equality with God a prey, or spoil, but made himself of no Reputation, and took upon him the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of men, &c. Its plain and palpable meaning is onely this, That though the Blessed Jesus was invested with the Divine Power and Authority, and sustain'd the person of a Deity, being made Sovereign Lord of all (in which alone consists the Scripture notion of God) yet he did not boast and triumph in his Greatness, but made his appearance to the world only in a servile condition of Poverty, and made himself so subject to those that seem'd his Superiours, that in obedience to their Authority he yielded himself up to a most reproachful death, not opposing his Almighty and Irresistible Power to rescue himself from their equally ignominious and merciless Decrees. And what's all this to Preexistence?

In the next place they urge us with some passages out of Saint *John*, *And now O Father Glorifie me with thine own self, with the Glory I had with thee before the world was. I come forth from the Father, and am come into the world: Again I leave the world, and goe to the Father, &c.* Whence they argue, that the Glory our Saviour prays to be restored to, seems to concern his Humane nature only, for the

Divine could never be disrobed of it, and therefore it supposeth that he existed in his Humanity before, and that his Soul was of old before its appearance in a Terrestriall Body. *Obj.* (1.) The most these places can pretend to prove, is barely our Saviours Preexistence, but to conclude thence the Preexistence of all mankind is a very wide and gaping inference, and we may as well prove we were all born of Virgin-Mothers because he was. Our Saviour was a singular person designed for an extraordinary Employment, and therefore may be supposed to have transacted with his Father about it, before he undertook it, and therefore we may as well Attribute all his personal Properties to Mankind in general, as argue for their Preexistence from his. (2.) Those Prædicates that in a strict and rigorous Acceptation agreed only to his Divine Nature, might by a communication of Idioms (as they phrase it) be attributed to his humane, or at least to the whole Person compounded of them both: Then which nothing is more ordinary in things of a mixt and heterogeneous Nature, as the whole man is stiled immortal from the deathlesness of his soul. We ought not therefore to understand these and the like passages in a nice and metaphisical rigour of this or that nature, but in a familiar sence of the Person of Jesus Christ.

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The instances hereof in Scripture are so frequent, that few texts concerning our Saviour (supposing his double nature) can well be understood without it. (3.) Methinks *Grotius*'s sence is very easie and natural *viz.* that the Glory he had with his Father before the world began, was only in the intendment of the Divine decree: as 1 *Pet.* 1. 20. *Revel.* 13. 8. he is said to be a *Lamb slain from the foundations of the world*, not that he was really slaughtered, but because he was then marked out in the divine decree to be a sacrifice for Mankind. It being a Proverbial form of speech among the Jews, to express matters of great moment only resolved upon in the Divine Decree, as if they were really existing: thus they say the *Messias* is ancienter then the Sun, and the *Mosaick law* older then the world, not as if they apprehended them *really* so, but only to express their absolute usefulness and necessity. Now Scriptures are not to be interpreted in an exact and strictly literal sence, but in a familiar manner suitably to the Idiom and manner of speaking used in the Age and Place, in which they were written. This therefore being a vulgar form of speech to express the Important usefulness of a thing existing only in decree, as if it had been as long in actual existence, as it was in Futurity; the glory our Saviour here prays for, and which he had before the world was,

as

as it could not, so it need not be his essential lustre, but was that honour, with which God had from all eternity design'd to dignifie the Messias. Thus have I satisfied all their Scripture Objections, that can need an answer, but as for their Applications of Parables and Cabalistical interpretations, they are too impertinent to bear one.

And now (*Sir*) having evinced the Precariousness of the Origenian Hypothesis from the Nature of the thing it self, and its uncouthness from some of the Divine Attributes, having [illegible] apparent and lamentable deficiency of [illegible] they produce for it, having engaged the suffrage of the Divine Oracles against it, and having given a handsome, rational and certain account of the Phænomina of *providence* without it, I hope 'tis sufficient to convince your self or any other ingenious and unpossest inquirer, that for any thing we are able to know, this is the first Stage upon which the Souls of men ever appeared and that there is no need of recurring to a former scene, to solve the perplexed difficulties of Providence, and to make the plot thereof seem neat and consistent enough to be a contrivance not unworthy the Divine Wisdome.

And now *Sir* methinks I ought not bluntly to conclude this tedious Discourse, and it would be but good manners to complement you with unnecessary

cessary excuses, or some other little pieces of Court-ship; but you know I have long since demonstrated to these common ceremonies of the world. And though I had a mind to trouble you with Apologies, or News, or any other impertinencies, yet I have not time (being just now upon the very point of my departure for *London*) to add any more, then that I am as much as I ought or can be

My Dearest Coz.

From *Trin. Coll.*
Oxon. May

Your &c.

ERRATA.

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F I N I S.